

Chester Aaron • Stephen Dobyns • Carolyn Riddle

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T H E

NORTH AMERICAN

R E V I E W



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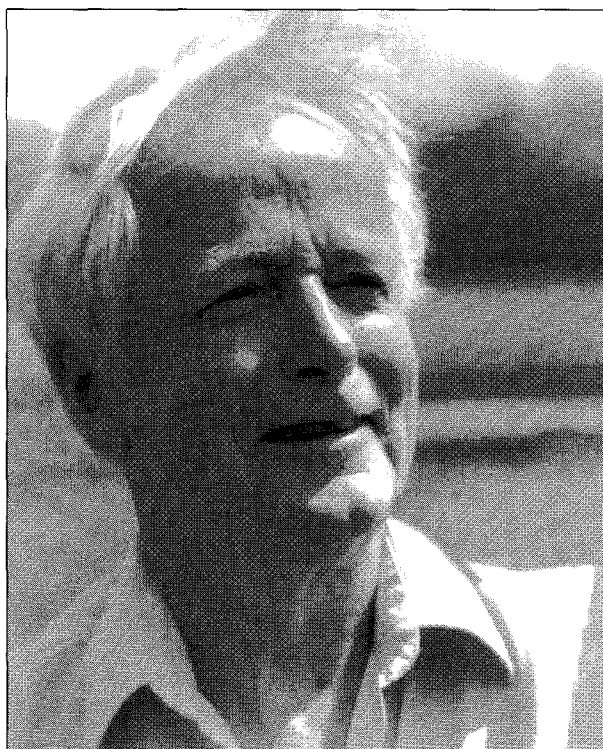
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Mr. Sindelar's winning entry appears
as the cover of this issue of the NAR.

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The judge of this year's competition was
Gary Kelley,
internationally-known illustrator
and an art director of this magazine.

Rules and deadlines for the 1997 cover competition
will be announced in the January/February 1997 number
of the NAR, and in other national media.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Spring. Gorgeous spring. Benign spring after a winter of surpassing malevolence. How shall we celebrate? Apparently by eating and drinking....To begin with, a generous excerpt from Chester Aaron's book just-out from Ten Speed Press, *Garlic Is Life* (all puns Mr. Aaron's own, not necessarily endorsed by us), followed by a soupçon of the lore of the egg, and various accidental garnishes drawn from the poetry and fiction that fills out our pages. A season—and a seasoning—to be relished.

Other books recent or forthcoming from NAR authors include: *Cultural Combat* (Virginia), a collection of essays by Margaret Morganroth Gullette, and *Dancing After Hours* (Knopf), new stories by Andre Dubus.

Of note: Moira Crone's short story "Gauguin" (January/February 1995) has been selected for inclusion in the next *Best Short Stories from the South* (Algonquin).

AN EDITORIAL OF SORTS: We've admired *The New Yorker* magazine for as long as we've been old enough to admire magazines, even though the admiration hasn't always been first-hand. We confess we missed most of the Ross years and had to catch up on them after the fact, reading bound volumes in libraries and the summer homes of friends, even tracking down a few of the wonderful Armed Forces editions of the World War II years—quarter-sized, ad-less editions distilled down to their very nubs of wit. But we were on hand for all the Shawn years, recalling especially our anticipation, in the fifties, of the next installment in J. D. Salinger's saga of the Glass family, and our overall devotion to the magazine as expressed by our intention to save every single issue forever. (The latter activity we abandoned in the early seventies, purely for reasons of space.)

What prompts this nostalgia in the NAR's pages is neither entirely personal nor, we trust, entirely gratuitous. It has to do with the tactics of marketing. A recent issue of *The New Yorker*—a double issue, actually, with its binding untypically perfect—devoted itself to women, and its publication drew considerable attention from the less-sophisticated press. This attention had nothing to

do with the issue's contents, which included, among other items, a profile of Hillary Clinton, a reminiscence of Katharine White, a disquisition on the passing of the Muse, and a provocative Q&A polemic on welfare by Katha Pollitt (there was no fiction, and the poetry was unnoticeable). Rather, the flap had to do with the revelation that Roseanne, a television and women's rights icon, was a "consultant" for the issue. Staffers quit in protest, went the story, and Roseanne's "vulgarity" was cited as the crawl-sticking excuse for the resignations. (A case, apparently, of Constant Editor, rather than Constant Reader, frowning up.)

In the issue itself, James Wolcott takes note of the controversy, presents a brief apologia for Roseanne's consultancy, and praises her pioneering TV sitcom (which, incidentally, used to be iconoclastically a lot funnier and more intelligent than it is today). Facing Mr. Wolcott's essay is a full-page photograph of the consultant/pioneer in question, her recent baby held lovingly in her arms—a picture so soft, so almost schmaltzy, that it seems to bear no resemblance to the Roseanne of the controversy, or even to the Roseanne of the Wolcott defense.

It's impossible to tell what influence Roseanne may have had in the making of this "Special Women's Issue." We didn't find anything in the magazine that its nominal editor-in-chief wouldn't have selected, nor, except for a quirky article in which a woman confesses that for a long time she was fascinated by the sexuality of being spanked, anything that might not have appeared in any *unspecial* number of *The New Yorker*. In short, if Annie Leibovitz's madonna-and-child photograph of Roseanne truly represents the woman herself, we here at the *North American Review* wonder what her consulting really consisted of—and we cannot escape the conclusion that the brouhaha around Roseanne, whatever her actual help, was used, perhaps even created, to sell *The New Yorker*.

But there's nothing evil about *that*—the sensitivities of a Harold Ross or a William Shawn aside—if the product be worthy, and we look forward to a "Special Men's Issue"—*in consultation with Howard Stern*, as the press release might have it. □

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Eating Icons: The Egg Reconsidered

PAULA PANICH

I'M INDEBTED TO a man who steamed and hissed and roared at the sight of an egg, a gift from a woman. This wasn't an ill-cooked coddled egg, but a *drawing* of an egg lying gently on its side. Much to the woman's surprise, the egg-on-paper appeared to this then-beloved man to be sharpened and pointed in his direction—a dangerous feminist egg, a threat to his sense of self.

I too was astonished at this man's—let's call him Humpty—*eggophobia*, for whence a person, except from an egg? Yet now I know that eggs, like women, were once barred from sea-going vessels as portents of ill winds and general bad luck. In fact, the utterance of the very name of the workaday product of the hen was, in some places, taboo on the sea.

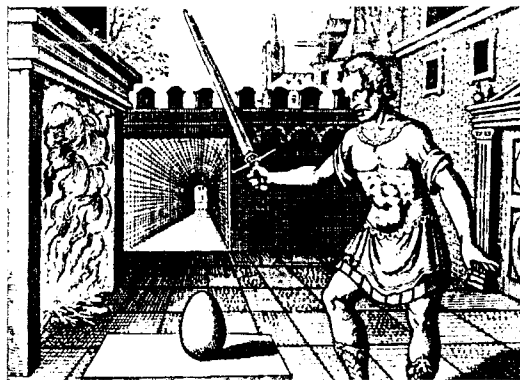
The egg in the drawing turned out to be a portent after all; the relationship between the man and my friend ended soon after. Humpty's roaring displeasure has, well, egged me on to reconsider the power of the egg on the plate and in the cultural imagination.

"The quickest relation between an egg and a man is when both are raw," writes M.F.K. Fisher, "the first perforce and the second from fatigue, weakness, or other hazards." A hen's egg is, after all, a promise of breakfast, or, if one is patient, a good roasted chicken at Sunday dinner. On the other hand the egg is enclosed, private, and mysterious. In the iconography of many of the world's spiritual traditions, the egg is a symbol of the universe and of the fertility required to perpetuate the same. The egg is emblematic, in writer Margaret

Visser's phrase, of "pure and undifferentiated power," the very thing that may have frightened Humpty. Eggs of the mind, then, and those (if we're lucky) fresh from the hen, permit us lowly beings, if our cholesterol levels will allow, to eat icons for breakfast.

The Egg of the World is said to have given birth to the universe and to the gods from whom all blessings flow; it is the golden germ of life. In a Vedic myth, "the universe...was entirely sunk in sleep. The...self-existent-Lord...first created the waters and deposited in them a seed. This seed became a golden egg, resplendent as the sun, in which he himself was born as Brahma the progenitor of all worlds."

In another Indian myth, a duck lays seven eggs, six of gold and one of iron, which the Mother of Waters rolls into the ocean, where they shatter into pieces. From the yolks grew the sun, from the whites the



moon; from the upper shells rose the vault of heaven, from the lower halves sprang the solid earth.

Stories of the Egg of the World combine and recombine in the great scrambled cosmogonies of the world. Ptah, the Egyptian lord of truth, emerged from an egg that came forth from the True and

Perfect Serpent. In a Greek creation myth, the Goddess of All Things brought forth the Universal Egg; then the Great Serpent, at her bidding, coiled around the egg seven times until it cracked in two, and out tumbled all that exists.

In Orphic traditions, night, with her dark wings, gave birth to the wind egg, from which sprang the god Eros. In alchemy, the egg was the container for matter and thought—the alchemical vessel, the Philosopher's Egg.

IN THE THOUGHT OF humankind, the egg is our original container, complete in itself. Yet however godly the egg, part of all that exists is dinner, and dinner is always problematic for those who must produce it.

We have the Romans to thank for the transition of the egg from magical object to breakfast staple. Still, it is helpful to know where eggs are meat and where they are poison; in the last century a European in Africa lost his life for the unpardonable sin of eating sacred eggs. According to Visser, in southeast Asia and elsewhere the egg is a delicacy, provided it has incubated to the point of turning "visibly and palpably into a chicken foetus." Yet eggs may be considered sexy, and therefore inappropriate for women to eat.

"You'll never starve if there are eggs in the house," said my Serbian grandmother, for whom eggs weren't sexy at all, perish the thought, but critical components of the larder. Hundreds of cookbooks have been written on the prepara-

tion of the egg in the last century or so; boiling a proper egg is not as easy as it sounds, and determining its freshness requires patience and some skill.

But to actually boil an egg... Should it be dropped (carefully, of course) into boiling water, or started in cold? And even eating an egg, however fresh and well-cooked, is a challenge in itself. Visser says that cracking the delicate egg-shell was once a miniature display, like carv-

house collecting eggs at the end of Lent. In Slavic countries, decorated eggs, such as the Ukrainian *pysanky*, predate Christianity, but its traditional motifs were easily adapted to the Easter egg.

On the table at Passover, the roasted egg symbolizes the roasted lamb during the time of the Temple—when sacrifice was part of Jewish piety.

FROM SACRED OBJECT to the currency of folk wisdom and tradition, the egg, real and symbolic, survived the test of time. Couldn't count chickens they've hatched, as everyone nor should all of one's eggs end into a single basket, nest eggs are critical for a future. Certainly it would be hatched to dispatch the goose and the golden egg, or to from an encounter with egg face.

Centuries, in Russia and elsewhere eggs were served at wedding fertility insurance, and festoon graves to secure immortality. In Serbia, red eggs were laid in vineyards on Easter in the hope of a rich autumn; eggs laid on holy days said to cure all ills.

Each egg can be dropped into water in order to divine the future which may be revealed as omen or not. As with eggs on ship, procuring eggs or bringing them into the house after sunset was for disaster. Bad luck will befall anyone cracking an egg at the table; if egg-shells are burned, they will not lay, and small yolkless eggs should never be brought into the house nor eaten. Children were forbidden in England and Ireland, to eat their breakfast egg-shells, lest they use them to sail through stormy seas.

Great nests of literary eggs are to be found in children's literature, though: talking eggs, flying eggs, green eggs, square eggs, dragon eggs, and dinosaur eggs. Eggs in fairy tales magically appear to feed hungry heroines, but are often cleverly encoded symbols of fertility. Of course there's Humpty Dumpty,

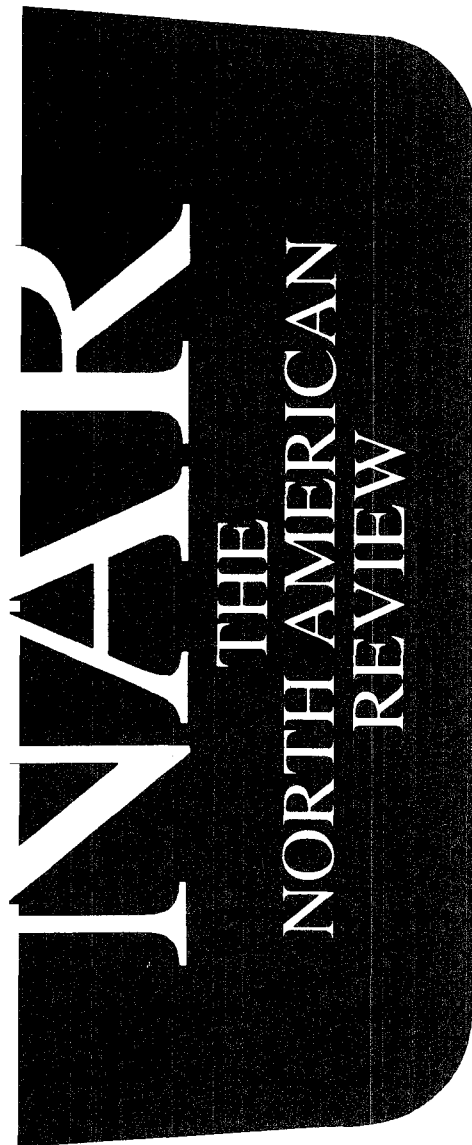
that other egg-man, who in Lewis Carroll's imaginative hands reached his evolutionary pinnacle as the erudite annotator of "Jabberwocky"—how else would Alice have learned the true meaning of the poem?

Horace wrote about eggs; so did Plutarch and Pliny. Shakespeare served up the occasional sardonic egg, this one from *Love's Labours Lost*: "Thou half-penny purse of wit, thou pigeon-egg of discretion." Literary eggs have been cosmic, made of flesh, and fatal. "Milk and Eggs: An entirely original and largely vegetarian comic opera in two acts," played in London in 1903.

Royal eggs have a peculiar history of their own. Besides carving hens' eggs at table, Louis XIV is said to have distributed gilded eggs after Mass on Easter Sunday. Russian empresses rewarded devoted subjects with porcelain eggs, but the greatest royal egg-frenzy of all was the ravenous appetite for encrusted Fabergé eggs developed by the last two czars. The bejeweled eggs turned out to be a bad idea, in retrospect; they're enough to make anyone into a Bolshevik.

Dream eggs are thought to be inauspicious; yet if the first egg of a white pullet is tucked under one's pillow, a dream of one's future spouse is sure to follow. In the view of Jungian writer Marie-Louise von Franz, an egg in a dream may be likewise positive, and might signify the emergence of a new understanding of the self. In the *I Ching*, she writes, one of the hexagrams, not surprisingly, identifies the image of the egg with the sign for "Inner Truth."

I wouldn't be surprised if Humpty-the-fearful has pulled up his metaphorical britches by now; stranger things have happened. The imagery of the egg has sustained us in our questioning of our beginnings and those of our gods, and the real ones feed us when we're hungry. There's no point in walking on eggs. They seem to keep the world spinning round. *Omne vivum ex ovo!* □



sun, perhaps seven thousand years before the first plastic pastel egg hit local shops.

In a leisurely roll across history, the egg became Christianized. St. Augustine declared the egg to be a symbol of the Resurrection, and as early as the eleventh century in Europe children went from house to

Toilet Training in Bush Land

CAROLYN RIDDLE

ALL THOSE TOURISTS standing in the lobby of the Nairobi Hilton try to convince me it's morning. A gust of African dust spins between glass revolving doors and I can feel the tired red lines in my eyes grow darker. I have been sleepless in Kenya for six hours. My skin begs me to let it curl inside the soft down of a comforter, but I find nothing comforting in this lobby.

I stand beside my scuffed luggage which didn't survive the 26-hour flight much better than I. I've slung my camera over my neck, a backpack over my shoulders, and I close my hand over my fanny pack, coveting my passport. My clothes are wrinkled. I've had time to shower and redraw my eyebrows. Surely, I look like fodder. I've already known the feel of a pickpocket. He was the passport examiner at Nairobi International.

People in my tour group summon enthusiasm, but they look as dazed and vulnerable as I feel. Outside the Hilton, beggars loiter on sidewalks, waiting. The shadow of a little boy with a baby tied to his back makes my tired skin crawl. I smile at the boy, and when he smiles back, I realize I'm his bull's-eye.

The sun raises its golden drape between gray buildings as if it's not sure whether to make a spectacle or hide. People in cars and vans, parked three deep in front of the hotel, wait for traffic to move. They honk continuously, but the honks are short, brusque exclamation points.

On the streets, business people flood the intersection on a rush to work. The men wear gray polyester suits from the 1980's. Women wear bold red and white striped dresses, high heels and a proud walk. Twelve buses start and stop like a well-orchestrated amusement ride, letting

people off along Kenyatta Boulevard. An American soldier on leave from Somalia enters the Hilton with a black girl under each arm. He leans sideways and says something to one and both girls giggle their way into the lobby. One places her hand over his buttocks and squeezes his wallet.

Edwin, my guide, stands outside next to the van, waiting for traffic to clear. When there is a momentary lull, he waves a hurried "Come, Miss." I grab my suitcase and rush into the street. Before I can make it to Edwin, the boy is beside me.

"Please, Madam," he says. "Something for my little brother?"

He looks like a defeated schoolboy, and is so persistent that I can't get inside the van without stepping around him. He spins to catch up with me and bumps the baby's head against a parking meter.

I stop and touch the back of the infant's head. The skin on both sides of the baby's temple has been rubbed raw from too many days on his big brother's back. In America I have grown daughters, and even now I can never forget the sound of an infant in pain. But this baby doesn't cry. I am so obviously American, and there is so much Swedish-Irish, passion-aggression in me that I want to give the brother shillings and a ticket to freedom, but I can't decide which will be most satisfying.

"Madam, please." The boy speaks with new sincere sadness. I reach into my pocket just as a prostitute saunters across the street. She unbuttons the front of her leather skirt, slides her hand between layers of chains, then pulls the elastic of her panties to one side and scratches her black muff of hair.

A police officer swings a billy club at her and she hisses at him like a lioness, then lollipops her long dark

tongue in a proposition. The officer bellies up a sarcastic laugh that says, "Oh, that," adjusts his machine gun over his shoulder and waves her away to another hotel.

The boy holds out his empty hand in front of me. "I have not eaten in days, Madam." I slide twenty shillings into his palm and the infant curls sleepily around his big brother's back. To me, it's just forty cents, but it will feed the boys for two days.

I am immediately swarmed by street beggars. Edwin, my guide, grabs my arm and whisks me into the van. "Oh, Madam. You must not do that again."

Within minutes, everyone in our tour group clamors into the van and we leave to find zebras and wildebeests in the bush. I don't yet know why I'm here, but it isn't just to photograph the back sides of zebras. Within hours, we'll be dominated by the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro.

September 22

THIS IS MY FIRST TRIP to Africa. I am both thrilled to be here and keenly aware that I know nothing except that I am slightly unsafe. Nights are the worst. I toss in my bed as a leopard devours a baboon outside my door. I sleep on the floor, then on the couch. I ache to slide dreamily next to my friend who whispered bedtime stories to me 13,000 miles ago. I break down and cry so hard I could almost awaken God.

After my second sleepless night, I make a deal with my body. If it will keep me alive one more day, I will collapse at sundown and let it rest. All day long, my skin hurts. I wish to pick a fight with the beasts of Hemingway's mountain. At night, the snow at 12,000 feet spreads an African mist over the savannah and cools me down. I bind myself in a

blanket, slide into a dry bathtub and read from Barry Lopez's *Arctic Dreams*, hoping his journal will give me some peace:

"Whatever wisdom I would find, I knew, would grow out of the land. I trusted that, and that it would reveal itself in the presence of well-chosen companions."

I have cried enough. I leave myself open to trust that which I cannot see. Only then do I sleep.

September 23

WE DRIVE FOR HOURS through blinding dust storms until we are 260 kilometers north of the equator. My lungs have coughed up African dust and I am losing weight from bouncing on eroded land which Kenyans call roads.

As we travel, I learn how tribal merchants cultivate cash from Americans. Edwin tells me they are suspicious and curious of Westerners. "The shop owner thinks you are clever with money," Edwin says. "You work with him to make a deal. He gets power if he has been courageous and persuasive."

"Is he testing to see who is the more clever?" I ask.

"Yes!" Edwin says. "The wise elder in a village is not the oldest, but one who is most clever."

When we stop at a Maasai village market, Edwin gets out, opens my door, and several young Maasai men crowd around the van. I give Edwin an 'I'm not ready for this' look, but

he is a good teacher. He walks away to see if I can learn.

The Maasai are tall, beautiful people who have seen civilization and turned their backs on Western magic. They are bare-chested, they carry long sticks, their earlobes are elongated and they wear red *shuka*, or togas, around their waists. One man has peeled his skin in geometric shapes to decorate his body. Another shaved his head so recently, I can still see razor marks on his scalp. His dark eyes seem to analyze the reticent shopper in me. He acts pleased that we are in his village.

When I step out into the warm Africa heat, the men cast a shadow on me that cools my head, and I catch a whiff of poverty. I pace slowly, watching clanspeople weave in and out of tin shops. A Maasai shepherd boy herds goats between wooden pillars and the merchants shoo him away. Another boy purchases six bananas for 20 shillings, or about 40 cents. When I hold up eight bananas, the merchant says, "400 shillings."

"A dollar per banana?" I walk away and the owner follows.

"I am Robert," he says. "See my cap?" he says, pointing to his head. "It says CAT. I am Robert who wears a CAT. Now you tell me, Madam. What will you pay?"

"Your bananas are too expensive."

"You must not go," he says. "Because you are my first customer today, I sell them to you for 100 shillings."

"I'm just looking," I answer as if I was in a tiled mall.

"No, Madam. I work with you," he calls after me, and I walk away slowly so that if he wants to stop me, he can. He stands at the entrance to his hut and tilts his hat back on his head. As I move to the next hut, I can feel his eyes picking my back apart.

The interior walls of the next shop drip with African beaded jewelry. The merchant, a woman, stands behind a rusted, sunbleached MasterCard sign. I pick up a lapis lazuli necklace. "How much?" I ask.

She says, "Because you are my first customer today, I work with you. What will you pay?"

"There are seven vans parked outside. How can I be your first customer?"

"You are my first customer," she repeats. "How much?"

Robert waves his CAT hat, signaling me to come back. "My friend, you are new to Africa, yes? I show you some things."

I look for guidance from Edwin, but he is at a distant picnic table sipping colas with other guides. "So, show me," I say to Robert.

He places ten bananas in my hand, stretches a beaded band around my arm and says, "You take these things. What do you give me in return? Something from America? I take your socks."

"My socks? Because they say Nike?"

"Nike is a good sock, no?"

I take off my shoes and exchange my socks for bananas and a bracelet.

"Now, you give me one more thing," Robert says. "A few American dollars for the owner."

I retrieve my socks. "No trade," I say.

"Here's what I do." Robert leans so close to me I can almost pick the tobacco off his teeth. "Two hundred shillings for the bananas and bracelet. It's a good deal."

"One hundred-fifty," I say.

Robert stands at my side, writes "75" on a piece of paper, and then discreetly cups the paper between his hands to show what a deal I'm getting. "First, pay. Later, we meet behind the toilets and you give me shillings. For my poor empty belly."

Sunset in Bushland. Sun and storm clouds contend at the start of the rainy season.



Robert escorts me to the owner and explains what I have agreed to pay. Then I wander out behind the shop. The bathrooms are Turkish step-ups, toilets that look like porcelain bowls cut off at the ground. I can hardly stand the odor, but I have so much to learn in such little time. I slip 100 shillings into Robert's hand, and ask him to tell me about the Maasai women.

He folds the money into his pocket, and without looking at me, says, "It is better to ask about men."

"The men in Africa talk about everything," I say.

"Oh, yes, they talk," Robert says. "Forgive me for my rudeness, Madam, but not to you." He hesitates and waves his hands. "It is very political. President Moi takes big American dollars, and he wants Maasai to say no words."

I slide another 100 shillings out of my pocket. Robert gives me two bananas in exchange, and then interprets my country's domestic policy. He tells me Americans might not send environmental dollars to Moi if they knew how Maasai treated their women. He tells me that I am an unclean woman because I have not been circumcised. Inside, I recoil, but the journalist in me nods impassively. I slip another 100 shillings into his palm and he tells me about African economics I hadn't thought to ask. Eventually, I have ten bananas and a loyal salesman who will tell me how to get anything, even a herd of goats. He is an expensive teacher, but he educates me out of my naïveté.

When I return to the van, Edwin takes the bananas out of my hand and tosses them to the goats. "You learn the path to friendship quickly, Madam," he says. "And you are kind to leave so much behind for Kenya."

September 24

IT IS MY FIFTH DAY in the bush and my cultural lessons have thinned my wallet. The tour literature says, "Today you will visit a Samburu Village for a first hand visit with these most colorful and photogenic people of Kenya." I translate this to mean, "Today, you will need many shillings."

As we drive out to the village, the sky is vast and complete, and it feels like there is no record of another civilization. A dominating thunderhead cloud suggests the rainy season will start any day, yet the air is so dry and windy, it could willfully hold up the rains.

Edwin pulls the van up to the village and waits to make sure there are no lions snoozing beneath trees before opening the door to let us out.

The Samburu *manyatta*, or village, looks like an amoeba devouring a piece of desert. Its perimeter is an oval ring made of thorny acacia brush that protect people, goats, and cattle from animal attacks at night. These thorns can also put out a child's eye and cause skin infections serious enough to lure hyenas out of the bush.

The leader of the clan who calls himself John ole Semoi comes to the entrance and welcomes us. He wears a short red shuka which flaps open in the warm breeze to show his athletic legs. He is naked from the waist up except for the bracelets and beaded jewelry which his wives made for him.

"Karibu. Welcome. Thank you. Please," he says, covering all the bases. His earlobes are long enough to slide a calf's femur through the hole, but he doesn't wear the beaded or metal ornaments that would stretch his lobes down his neck. He carries two sticks: the shorter he used when he was young to herd cattle, the longer to kill lions. He lays down his sticks only when he is sleeping and his dogs or wives are awake to protect him.

His stomach is decorated with three rows of inch-long scars that follow his ribcage up to his heart. He decorated his body with a knife when he became known as *il-murran*, or warrior.

He waves us into the compound repeating his greeting. "Karibu." Like all Samburu warriors, his milk teeth were pulled when he was a child so that he could be fed if he got lockjaw.

Behind me, I hear Edwin close the van. I know that if I need him, he will come for me. But he is Kikuyu and is not invited into the manyatta.

People in my tour group enter single file to avoid touching the boundary wall. Several dust devils form in

the midst of the village and spin erratically between huts. One splash-es us with a burst of blackness. The smell of cow dung and African dust assaults me and I sneeze until tears clog my sinuses. A dog tucks its tail between its legs and closes its eyes to the wind.

Each of the ten huts inside the village resembles a long loaf of rye bread repackaged in slabs of cardboard and string. Against the back wall of the village, four women weave green acacia branches together to build a new hut. A fifth woman carries cow manure to the building site. Before the moon rises, they will seal the sides with a mortar of manure and dirt.

Each thatched roof is a different combination of cowhide, cardboard, fabric remnants, and twigs. The roof on one hut has been repaired so recently that I can still read the faded Whirlpool label.

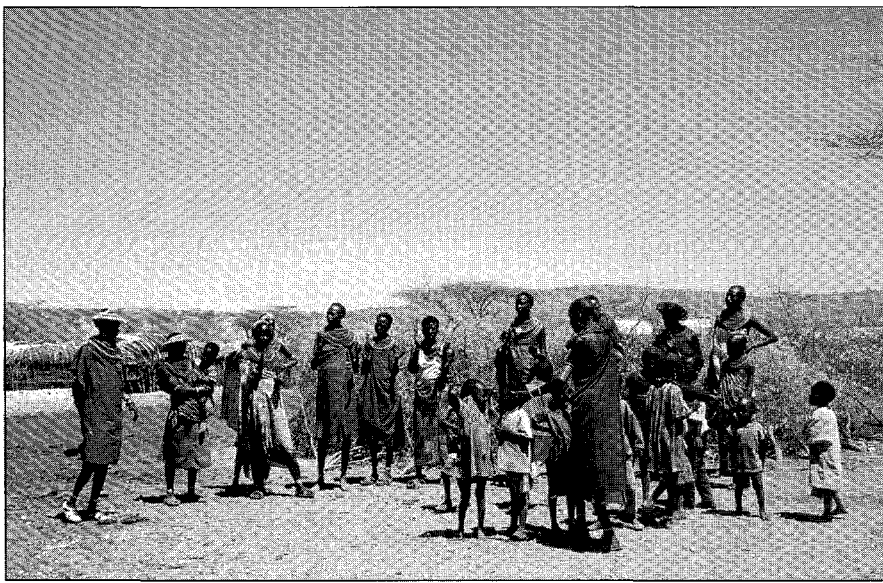
It is the dry season and the only green around us is a concrete block building in a valley far outside the perimeter. In mid-October, the rainy season will begin and the women will be busy with roof repairs.

Within moments, women and children emerge from their huts and breathe color into the compound. Little boys, two and three years old, wearing ragged American basketball t-shirts, hold out their hands begging for gifts from the white women. Samburu women nod at our tenderness to their children.

"Hallo. Hallo. Something for me?" the children ask, clinging to anyone who will touch them. A small boy's face is streaked with dirt. One little girl in a blue polyester jumper catches my attention. Her dress has been dipped in river water so many times it barely resembles pale blue. She is deliberate and private without crowding. "Pencil, Madam?" she asks, and blinks dirt out of her eyes.

I melt with the luster in her voice and unzip my fanny pack. The boys shove her aside and grope to see what's inside my bag. All I can find is my Uniball pen. I hold it above the boys and press it into the small girl's hand.

"For me?" she coos. She doesn't look at it. Instead she holds it like a



Women welcome visitors with songs as they display their colorful beadwork. Color combinations and patterns signify the age and status of the wearer.

secret at her side, caresses the pen's smooth plastic casing with her fingers, and smiles delicately. No one tries to grab it from her. It is against Samburu culture to harm fellow clansmen. Their code of honor, *nkanyit*, separates them from their warlike Maasai cousins.

Other children slap my fanny pack with hands open to show they're not taking anything. I want to be vulnerable to the Samburu, to open myself so that I can learn without judgment. I'm aware that my Swedish skin is a visible barrier.

Before I arrived, I thought I'd learned enough from the Maasai to prepare me for this visit. But now, my instincts tell me, I'm too American, too much a Christian and the lions are hungry.

Samburu women, many with babies tied to their backs, form a line just inside the village entrance, and they sing a welcome song in Maa. The women have under-developed wailing voices, a strong rhythm, and a poor sense of choral unity. They follow the same melodic path, but no one sings the same note, which makes their music seem more of a weapon than welcome.

Their second song is a lullaby. It's softer, more in unison. More effective than their lullaby is the tobacco sedative which infants suck from their mothers' fingertips. A baby's cry while the mother is bathing will attract crocodiles. Those same cries

when she's gathering sticks for the fire is a call to hyenas.

We applaud. John smiles and points to a young pregnant woman who he says is his fourth and newest wife, a skittish girl with an undeveloped body. Her head has been shaved, and she won't be allowed to let her hair grow until she's been married five years or given birth to six children. Her bodice of beads is not as intricate as the other women's neck pieces. Her brown eyes are huge and as distrustful as an injured giraffe at sundown.

John nods and the women begin a song they sing during the young men's circumcision ritual. At first it is a monotonous sound, then builds into a loud wail. One woman, taking the role of the mother of the circumcised boy, cries out for her 17-year-old son, then with relief and satisfaction that he endured the operation with stoic detachment.

By the time they've completed their performance, more than thirty women and nearly fifty children have gathered around us. Each woman extends her arms, which are adorned with rings of beads, bracelets, and armbands. The youngest girls wear heavily beaded earrings that curl around their long looped earlobes.

Hannah, the psychologist in our group, opens her backpack and says, "Look, children, I have brought something for you." The children close in around her so quickly, she

loses her balance and falls to the ground. Her husband, Bob, catches her just as she rolls into fresh goat scat.

John waves his stick at Hannah. "Not now, Madam." He hits his stick against the boys' bottoms and shoos them away, scolding them in Maa for disrupting his agenda. Two people from our group return to the vans and we are down to twelve.

"So now, you come with me," John beckons and leads us deeper into the village. He takes us to a small sheltered arena barely large enough for two animals. "This is for baby pets," John says. "We separate cow and goat from mothers so we can have food and milk." A calf and goat peer out at us through a confined dome of thorny acacia branches. They are the foundation of Samburu diet. Each morning, women draw blood from the calf by inserting a shunt into the animal's jugular. Then the women mix the blood with goat's milk. Twice daily, the Samburu eat cooked beef, beef blood and goat's milk.

"Berries, also," he adds, placating our predictable Western wince. "And roots, tree barks, and berries which Enkai, our God, placed on earth."

I cannot imagine where they would find berries or even a single wild grain to balance their diet. The village is in the middle of grasslands so fragile that if I stepped on the grass, it would break. For miles around, there is nothing but dust and brittle acacia bushes. Yet, except for one lame man, Samburu men are sinewy, tall and lean. None of them is old enough to have gray hair. Up close to him, I see John's eyes are bloodshot, perhaps from drinking a Samburu stimulant made of cow's blood and urine.

He leads us to another circle of thorns where he keeps his cows and goats corralled at night. Outside the circle, the ground is matted where warriors spent the night guarding the village.

During our visit, all but two of the warriors are out with the cattle. The ones who stay behind wear long plaited wigs made of elephant- and cow-hair. The wig is smeared with red ocher and animal fat. Actually, it's Brylcreem and clay, but I'm not

to reveal what I learned one day behind the toilets. Under the wig, the warrior's hair is short so that when he dresses in street clothes and rides the truck into Nairobi, he won't be recognized as Samburu.

John stands outside the corral and tells the story of his life, always speaking in present tense. "I am six years old and I own eight cows, one for every rainy season that I work for my father. Now I am fourteen and I kill the lion that kills my sister." He proudly turns back the shuka and shows us scars on his leg. "When I am sixteen, I am circumcised during *ilayeni*, and I am *il-murran*, you see what I mean? I am no longer a shepherd. I am elite. I protect the shepherd boys."

For eight years, he protected his village from lions and crocodiles. During those years he could raid other tribes and steal their cattle if he did so respectfully. He could also have sex with any unclean woman, as long as he didn't make her pregnant—a system they call celibacy. Years ago, he says, a pregnant girl would be tied to a bull and left in the bush for the hyenas, or at the least given up for adoption to a family who needed another workhand. But women are treated better now. A pregnant girl has her unclean parts sliced away and quickly marries so that the family is not shamed.

"When I am 24, my mother decides it is time for me to have a family. She spies on many villages to find young girls for me. When I am 27, I claim the wives my mother has chosen."

On his wedding night, a shaman from a nearby village slips into John's hut, kneels on the floor, and cuts out the unclean part of his bride's body during a rough and unceremonious circumcision.

On the third day of his marriage, his wife cleanses herself with a coat of red ocher and then lies on a cowhide bed so that she can perform her duty. She's allowed to scream during either ritual.

"Now my wife has much respect when she is pregnant," John says. "She is God's favorite and I cannot have my way with her. It's why I have many wives. Under my cloth is

the secret to many children and happy families."

She comes to his side when he calls her name. He runs his hands over the top of her head and speaks to her in Maa. She looks down at the ground until he is finished. Another woman beside her slips her hand under the young wife's cloth and they lock their long black fingers together. It is so covert, I almost miss this moment of intimacy.

John strokes his wife's belly, then moves us deeper into the village to another circle of thorny bushes. "This is Parliament," he says. "Only men allowed in Parliament. Here we solve problems. Maybe we talk about where to take cows to find food. Maybe we talk about a problem between brothers. Maybe we talk about a woman who has grown lazy."

Tom, a telecommunications headhunter in Los Angeles who wants to fly a plane over the Ngong Hills, says, "The women do *all* the work?"

"All the work," John says, as if he's heard this question too many times. "Men are good thinkers. Women are for work. They gather sticks, build homes, milk goats, carry water, feed babies, make shoes."

I am overwhelmed by the pungent smell of John's body odor this early in the hot Africa morning. And at the same time, I'm struck with an edge of sadness for these women who are resigned to their condition.

"What do the men do?" I ask. The question is out before I can stop it.

John's silence is compact, void of grace. "So now, we solve problems. We take care of the cows, we hunt lions, and we solve problems."

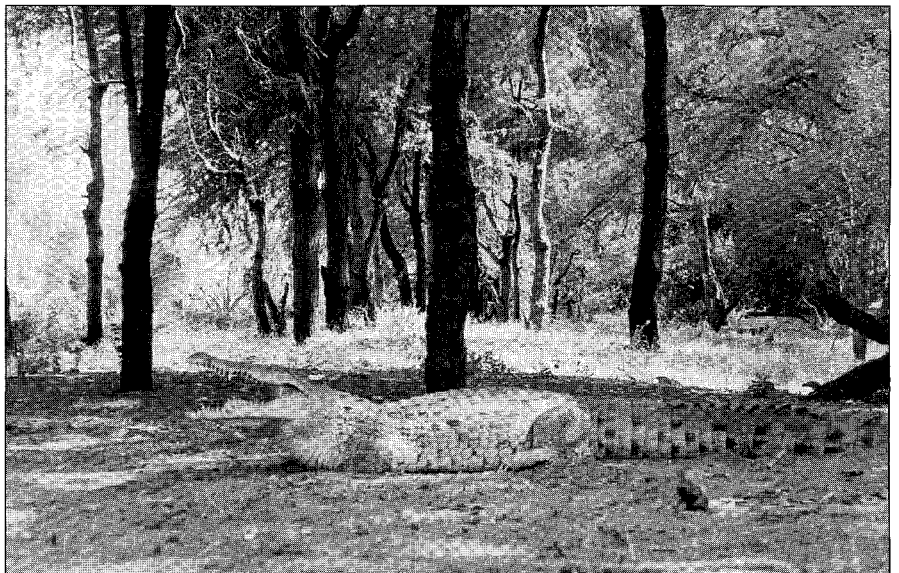
The cattle have completely decimated the savannah to the point that during the dry season nothing grows. I can see why Parliament is such an important part of his life.

John turns his back to me and the man who is lame with severe scoliosis stands directly over me, breathing down on my forehead. Even curved as he is, he is head and shoulders taller than me and I know this intimidation too well to do him any good.

John waves at seven other men standing nearby. "All of us come from one chief. We are brothers, you see? Samburu village is an extended family," he says. The last man he introduces is the tallest brother, Haesie, the school supervisor, who carries the thickest stick. His job is to make sure his clan welcomes the priest into the village each Sunday morning, and that the children attend school from eight until four every day until they are sixteen.

Before Haesie became the supervisor, the old women taught Samburu culture. But so many children have died from crocodiles and malaria before they were old enough to be named. They watched the Kikuyu thrive when Catholics taught warriors

Crocodiles along the Ewaso Nyiro (River) are equally feared by people and animals.



how to boil parasites out of goat's milk. Western women visiting the village reach into their own pockets for money and the Samburu men find it harder than ever to be clever.

Haesie admits the school which opened in 1991 has plummeted the village into a cultural dilemma. Young women are refusing to be circumcised and want the power of money to make choices. Shunned from the village, these women seek refuge in Nairobi where most became prostitutes and die of what Haesie calls, "the plague." The lure of money from soldiers stationed in Uganda, Zaire, and Somalia, causes more young women to abandon Samburu culture for the beds of wealthy soldiers on R & R.

"The Catholic church gives us the building and teachers, but we must pay for tools." He points to the school, the green concrete block building far outside the village, and requests money as if he'd attended a seminar for superintendents. "Please, Madams. Open your pockets and give us what you can. Take my address. Send things to help children learn."

"What helps the children learn?" I ask.

"Pencils. Books. Footballs."

I wonder what shall I send? Something by Richard Scarry or Doctor Seuss? How about *Catcher in the Rye*, or a book about female independence too subtle at first glance, like *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Maybe I'll send copies of Working Woman's *Communications Survival Guide*. What will happen to this clan if their women learn how to sharpen pencils?

He gets at least 500 shillings from each of us, and says, "Please, You're Welcome," as we press money into his hand. I look for the little girl who's holding my pen.

When Haesie smiles again, John says, "So now, we welcome you into our homes."

"Like hell," someone mumbles behind me, and we lose three more from our tour group.

John opens a worn ledger which contains a smudged pencil list of all the families who have opened their huts to us, and then I see why John is the ruling elder. He divides us into two-person groups, and I am so unsus-

pecting, I have no idea I'm about to be conquered. I want to believe that at the end of this tour, he will pile the women into Toyota vans and return them to townhouses in Nairobi.

I am paired with Tom, the telecommunications headhunter from Los Angeles. John takes Tom and me to his youngest brother, Samuel. Samuel's first name is really Nkimba, but the Catholic church has given Biblical names that are easier on the tourists.

Samuel could be on the cover of *GQ*, he is so ruggedly handsome. He wears a blood-red and blue-plaid shuka which doesn't seem to hang right on him. His ears have not been pierced, he speaks Maa much faster than his older brother, and his sandaled feet are clean. No one, not even the tourists, are this clean.

Samuel leads us to the back of the village and stops at the entrance to his hut. He acts diffident but not weak towards us, and he holds his hand out to stop me from entering. Women dart in front of me, chattering frantically, and they push their way into the hut. Samuel acknowledges each one by name as she enters. After nine women have slipped inside, he slices the air with his arm. The remaining women hiss at him, but he is abrupt.

"Enter, please," he says to me in a low-pitched, not quite cultivated voice.

The top of the hut comes to the middle of Tom's chest and he waits for me to enter first. There is no door, but the walls overlap and I feel like I'm entering a conch shell made of manure. I duck down with a Westerner's eagerness to be polite.

As I step inside, I am instantly blinded by oppressive heat and darkness. I narrowly miss bumping into a cauldron of soup warming over hot coals. The brew smells of tree roots I can't identify, maize, and wild onions. Hot steam rises into the hut and warms the mortar of manure just enough to make me take shallow breaths.

I can see the eyes of an old woman who sits directly opposite the entrance. A ray of light catches the layers of her colorful beads, turning her old woman's chest into a storefront display. She smiles at me and I

point to my own eyes, shaking my head. "I can't see," I say. She nods, but does not speak.

Her face is terribly weathered by wind and sun, her hair is long and straggly, pulled back into a bun. She is the first person I've seen in the village with gray hair.

I am on my knees, using my hands to feel a path through the dirt floor. Finally, she takes my hand and points me to the rounded end of the hut. Before I make the turn, my eyes adapt so that I can see shelves made of concrete blocks and tree limbs. Four plastic gallon bottles stacked on the shelves contain beads and wires, dried corn to be ground into maize, and rolled cloth.

"Please, Madam. You must sit in the place of honor," Samuel says. He leans into the hut and sits just inside the doorway. I slide onto a slab of crisp cowhide. Now I can see who is in the hut with me.

Sitting beside me is a woman wearing a colorful formless wrap, whom I hadn't seen until now. She lifts her arm and the head of a baby flops down around her waist. The infant suckles its own gums and seems at peace nestled against its mother's skin. The mother and I exchange a moment of knowing intimacy. "Boy or girl?" I ask.

"Boy," she says and seeks an approving nod from Samuel. The birth of this boy will elevate Samuel's status with the elders.

He tells us we are in the home of the mother of the chief's first born son. "Do not insult her. She is the lady of the house," he says, and then he asks where we're from.

Tom says, "Los Angeles."

I look at the chief's wife's old-dog eyes. If I could hear her voice, I believe she would be a rich storyteller.

Samuel asks if Tom brought an extra UCLA t-shirt. When Tom says, "No," Samuel loses interest. "And your home, Madam?"

I dab stinging sweat from my eyes and tell him I'm from Kansas City, and before then Chicago.

"I have heard of Chicago," Samuel says. "There are crocodiles in Chicago River, yes?"

I could tell him crocodiles in Chicago drive cars, but I'm pushing

the language barrier. "No crocodiles in Chicago," I say and we end our casual chat.

Samuel tells me I'm sitting on his bed. The man sleeps alone on this side of the hut. The wives and children sleep on the other side. When I look around Samuel's sleeping quarters, I see that he leads a life of choices. On the shelf behind Samuel's cowhide mattress, there is a boombox with a black market Willy Nelson tape inside. A Total gasoline card has been tossed on top of the stereo.

Samuel crosses his legs and folds his hands in his lap. "I wish now for you to tell me your problems," he says. I think, my god, I'm sweating inside a shithouse with a therapist. No wonder he's so clean. I should tell him Tom's married to another woman and she would be here if she wasn't down with African Tummy. There's a thousand dollar problem, even to an American psychologist.

In the few days I've known Tom, I've learned that he talks incessantly when he's nervous. The heat inside the hut is almost annihilating. I am too vulnerable and I sense that Tom is scarcely balancing himself as he fires questions at Samuel.

Samuel's wife dangles a doll carved from tree bark in front of me and I begin to understand why we've been invited into her home. When I look at her, she gives me a pleading "like me best" grin, but I am not yet filled with information.

"Do you live in the village?" I ask Samuel.

"No. I go to the university where I study to be a chef."

"What is your favorite recipe?" Tom asks. He wipes a river of sweat from his eyebrow and cusses under his breath at the heat.

Samuel looks at me. "What is Riss Pee?"

"Food," I say. "What is your favorite food?"

"I learn not much yet." The women close in around me. They grow restless with the conversation and spread bracelets, dolls, wide necklace ruffs, and wedding breastplates in front of me.

"Are the women afraid when you're not here at night?" Tom asks.

Samuel brings one knee up to his

chest and wraps his arms around his ankle in feigned casualness. "I answer that question outside."

He tells us he is not one of the tribal elders and is not required to protect the village. Therefore, he can go outside the village to earn his education. And then he tells the story of his circumcision. Like all Samburu men, he is proud of his initiation. He describes the razor blade his mother used to shave his head; the *adumu* dance, a competitive jump to see who can stretch the highest. He names the sponsors who pinned his legs and arms to the cowhide couch as the tribal surgeon sliced away the foreskin. His hesitation says he's hiding something. Perhaps he winced and received a lesser position on the tribal council.

"Were you brave?" I asked.

"Yes. Vetty brave."

"Was this a happy time for your family?"

"My family, vetty proud," Samuel answered.

"And what about circumcising the women? Is this a happy time for families?"

"Vetty happy," Samuel says.

I can feel the African dust discolor my clothes and dominate my lungs. I wonder if my hepatitis shot is strong enough. "What makes the family happy?" I ask.

"Because the girl is deciding to be a woman."

The young mother next to me spreads five bracelets in front of me. She places one on my wrist. "No," I say. I remove the bracelet and return it to her. Sweat beads on the baby's forehead and the infant slips farther down into the woman's lap. Its eyes drift open and then close in the dreamy heat.

"Why must the girl be circumcised to become a woman?" I ask. The women stop moving. Steam from the pot makes the back of my shirt wet and sticky. Samuel and I face each other with respective primitive powers. Swedish woman, Samburu man, both needing to persevere.

"She is born with the unclean part. She cannot be a woman if she is unclean."

"What if she chooses to keep her unclean part?"

"She must not. It gives her insanity."

"And would you marry a woman who wasn't circumcised?" I ask.

He reaches up to the ceiling and slides a cardboard back to let in a breeze. "I answer that problem when we are outside."

One of the women leans toward me and slips a necklace made of lion teeth around my neck.

"So now, any problem, you tell me and I will answer you," Samuel continues. "But first, you accept something from the house." He takes five bracelets from the old woman, spreads them out before me, and reminds me that I'm not to offend the woman of the house. The women are too poor and too competitive for me to believe this is a gift.

Tom points to a beaded necklace for his sick wife. The young mother places a bracelet on my wrist and a wooden doll on my lap. "I don't have that much money," I say.

The wooden doll smells like rotting beef and burned tobacco. "Did you make this?" I ask. She gives me a nod and I know no matter what I ask she will nod.

"First you must select something from the house," Samuel says. His voice has no affect on the women who grovel for my attention. I realize I must purchase something before I will be released from the hut. The breeze dies down and the smell of wild onions flips my stomach like a flapjack. A twig snaps from the walls of the hut and tangles in my hair.

Sweat pours down my chest. My jeans cling to my thighs and my cheeks are so hot I am no longer able to count the number of women before me. I look at the selection of plain bracelets and I cannot imagine where I would wear any of them.

I look at the dead chief's old widow. Her eyes are black and resolved and I finally understand her. She is no longer concerned about the status the clay beads can bring her. Instead, she is connected to simplicity. I select a doll and the bracelet that is just like the one on her arm. "These," I say.

"One thousand, six hundred shillings," he says. I am forced out of simplicity and remember Robert's toilet training.

"I no longer like it," I say.

The women chatter loudly, demanding their slice of shillings. "How much will you pay?" he asks.

"I will answer that question outside," I say.

He smiles to let me know he is not done being clever. "How much?" he asks again.

My shirt is soaked from the heat. My hands are dirty and I cannot take in another breath. "If I don't get fresh air, I will throw up on your bed."

"We leave," he says. He is out of the hut so fast that when the women compete for the doorway, he shoves them back inside to let me out.

The fresh air, perfumed by goat and cow scat, becomes my new exotic wonder. After I have cooled down, I give him 800 shillings for the doll and bracelet.

"One thousand two hundred," he says.

"No." I return the doll and bracelet to him. The women screech in Maa and he dismisses them with a wave.

"Okay, eight hundred."

Other women in the village see that I have opened my fanny pack and they come at me, their arms dripping with jewelry. "No," I say as they beg me to purchase from them. They are a formidable gauntlet and I must weave a path between them to get out. Edwin stands outside the entrance, watching to see if I need him.

I am nearly out of the village when I notice the small girl. She is standing too close to the thorny perimeter, trying unsuccessfully to open the pen.

"Wait," I say to Edwin with cool authority. I walk back through the gauntlet without acknowledging the vendors and kneel down before the child. She is no more than four years old, but she has old eyes.

I tear two blank pages from my journal, open the pen for her and draw marks on the paper dark enough to break the language barrier. She gives me a smile of fear that seems to say, "Do you know what you're asking?"

It's not in my power to give her what she needs. Instead, I press five shillings into her hand and say, "Hold tight to your insanity." □

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Garlic & Life

CHESTER AARON

*Wherever
I wander....I
taste garlic
at the
back of my
throat.*

My father loved garlic. Back to me this morning, as I lounge on the deck of my house in Occidental, my breath showing in the cold air, comes the image of that boulder of a man pulling up out of the soil behind the house of my childhood a handful of long green leaves with, at the end, an object as large as his fist. I see him squatting there, the redblack root extended and shaken to clear it of soil. The explosion of sharp garlic pungency that invades the air settles in my ragged sweater and shirt, in my long winter underwear. Wherever I wander, in the classroom or on the playground or, at night, huddled beneath the blankets, I taste garlic at the back of my throat.

Sitting on the deck now, considering the coming day's work in the fields, I see myself, that twelve- or thirteen-year-old boy, kneeling next to my father who—oh! if I had only known—in seven years, would be dead.

I know now, without his ever having told me, that as a boy *he* had knelt in a Russian Georgian field in just such reverential awe at the side of *his* father. He too had huddled beneath the blankets in the cold Tochliavari darkness, remembering his father's fist filled with the dark red root and tasting, at the back of his thirteen-year-old throat, the rich rush of garlic.

History is genetic.

The wild progenitor of garlic possibly originated in the high plains of West-Central Asia, most likely in the Kirghiz desert of Western Russia, close to the ancient trade routes with China.

The plant, probably carried and spread by nomadic tribes, was cultivated in the Middle East more than five thousand years ago, long before the existence of the printed word. But carried in countless legends and unending folklore from all over the world: garlic's protection against the evil eye and any and all other bad luck.

Evidence of the use of garlic dates from before the time of the Pharaohs. In fact, clay models of the head (or bulb) have been

dated back to 3750 B.C. Six perfect garlic heads, dried but still viable, were found in the tomb of Tutankhamun, who lived about 1500 B.C.

Garlic was used in Egypt for food, for medicine, for religious ceremonies. The slaves who built the Pyramid of Cheops considered it as essential to life as air. It was these same Egyptians who used garlic as a device to test fertility: *Let a clove of garlic remain the whole night in her womb. Should the smell be present in the morning in her mouth, she has conceived; if not, she has not.*

Should you take a moment to decipher the Talmud, the ancient Jewish book of law and tradition, you would find that married couples should eat garlic on Friday night, the Sabbath, so that, in the biblical sense, they might know each other better.

The first recorded use of garlic in China (as food and as medicine for various ailments) was around 2000 B.C. A few centuries later Aristotle was describing garlic as a tonic; later still, Aristophanes was joking about garlic in his plays and Hippocrates and Pliny the Elder were advocating the use of garlic, the latter suggesting that when pounded with fresh coriander and taken in neat wine, garlic acts as an aphrodisiac. (I tried it on the eve of my seventy-first birthday, with what any biased judge would consider inadmissible evidence of result.)

The first part of the oldest Sanskrit manuscript in existence (a medical treatise copied on birch bark about A.D. 350 and probably brought from India by the Buddhist cave-dwellers in Kuchar in Eastern Turkestan) is devoted entirely to garlic, describing Indian medical traditions dating back to the 6th century B.C.

In the 1st century A.D. the Roman legions used garlic to improve their health. Those same legions, which also planted garlic with roses and violets around their forts and villas, were responsible for introducing the bulb to Britain. The word *garlic* originates from the Anglo-Saxon "gar-leac," or "spear-plant."

"Allium," the ancient Latin name for gar-

lic, is derived from the Celtic *all*, signifying *hot* or *burning*.

The species name “sativum” means planted, cultivated or sown (not wild) and the genus *Allium*, of the lily family Liliaceae, includes as many as 700 species.

Another version: garlic (Greek: *skorodon*; Latin: *allium*) was closely associated with serpents. In “About Medicinal Substances” a contemporary of Pliny the Elder, a famous herbalist named Dioscorides, identified one variety of the plant as “serpent garlic” because of its coiling flower stalks. In Greek *snake* = *ophis*. Thus: *ophioskorodon*, known in my boxes as *rocamboule*, or *serpent hardneck garlic*.

Allium sativum var. *ophioscorodon*.

The *Kyranides*, a Greek collection of remedies from the early Roman Empire, advises readers who fear the presence of snakes to “eat garlic ahead of time and drink hot blood with wine.”

The use of garlic was widespread during the Great Plague of 1665 and, afterward, in many cholera epidemics. Today even the most sophisticated medical newsletters from the most prestigious medical schools report the financing of research programs that result in praising the potential virtues of garlic in the treatment of every disease that effects the body from the outer perimeter of the cranium to the epidermis of the sole of the foot. And every millimeter of bone and tissue inside that perimeter.



O.K. A small serving of pseudo-scientific jargon.

Get ready. This is a test.

Garlic is *Allium sativum*.

Isn't the onion also an *Allium*?

Genetically, visibly and tastily, *Allium sativum* is distinguished from *Allium fistulosum* (the bunching onion) or from *Allium cepa* (the common/red purple or common/yellow brown or common white) onions from other *Allium cepa* (*Aggregatum* group) such as Potato Onions or Purple Topsets or Shallots (at last count approximately seventy-seven varieties) or from *Allium ampeloprasum* (the onion/leek).

Not all *Alliums* are created equal.

Now, today, do yourself a favor.

Go bite into a clove of the garlic on the

shelves or in the bins of almost any supermarket in any city in the United States. Whether shipped from Oregon or Mexico or California (and now China), it will almost certainly be the white-skinned variety commonly called California Early or California Late. That is the garlic your ancestors and your heirs and 98% of the world's current consumers know, knew, as *garlic*.

White garlic. As in *white-skinned*. Very hot white-skinned.

Shape: a squat white turban ranging in weight from two ounces to six or eight ounces. Current price in the local market bins, as of this minute: \$2.59 a pound. Depending on when you buy it and where it comes from it will survive on your shelf about a month before it begins to deteriorate (meaning to shrink, to lose strength, to shoot up a green tip, to soften, eventually to smell rotten).

In their elegies to garlic, could Aristotle and Hippocrates and Pliny the Elder possibly have been referring to this white California garlic which throws a bite so intense that it numbs lips and palate, destroying the flavor of the garlic itself?

Not likely.

Hippocrates, as well as wise old Aristotle and clever Pliny, would have demanded the emperor treat the farmers and sellers of such garlic as if they were upstart Romans.

After I harvest this coming summer, in three or four months, I will glance up and down the lines of the bundled garlies hanging on the lines in my curing shed. Some heads will be small, some large; some heads will be shaped like the “ordinary” garlic (the classic “turban”), some will look like artichokes or cacti or carbuncles, some like the onion domes of the Russian Orthodox churches. A few will send long white banners from the tips of their cloves, as if they represent one of the many communes participating in the rampaging *paglio* of Italy's Siena.

These have to be the garlies so admired by those ancients of such wise and discerning eye and palate. No California White garlic for Aristotle or for Herodotus, the Greek historian, the “Father” of History, who informs us that there is an inscription of Egyptian characters on a pyramid which records the

Evidence of the use of garlic dates from before the time of the pharaohs....

*Aristotle
would have
gone bonkers...
over my
Russian Red
Toch...*

quantities of radishes, onions and garlic consumed by the laborers who built the monstrous honorific.

Extraordinary humans, those immortal Greek mortals. Nothing ordinary for them. They relied, I am certain, on *extraordinary* garlic.

Aristotle (as my father did, as I do) would have gone bonkers over my Russian Red Toch for example.

When my own supply of Russian Red Toch (one variety of the thirty[two?] garlics I now grow in my forty boxes) dwindles and I am fortunate enough to find a grower (or a visitor from Russian Georgia) who can spare me ten or fifteen heads, the garlic costs *me* \$28.00 a pound. What do I sell it for? \$5.50 a pound.

So I lose \$22.50 for each pound I sell?

Oh yes, I am my father's son.

Like my other thirty (thirty-two?) varieties of garlic, Russian Red Toch is certainly not white. Nor is it ordinary. Don't miss that parenthesized *thirty-two?* in the phrase which leads the preceding sentence.

In time the mystery will solve itself. As most mysteries do, in time.

My Russian Red Toch is a variety of garlic called *artichoke*. The *variety* called artichoke belongs to the subspecies *sativum*. The subspecies called *sativum* is considered a *softneck* garlic. Softneck garlics—having tops (or greens, or green leaves) that are pliable, easy to braid—are believed to have evolved from the subspecies called *ophioscorodon*. They've lost the ability to bolt and produce flowerstalks with topset bulbils.

To compensate for this loss, softneck garlics generally produce larger bulbs (or heads) with more cloves per head, more fertile leaves and therefore more clove layers.

Softneck garlics are easier to grow and are more productive per acre. They require less labor and adapt more easily to different soils and climates. They can be very mild or very hot, often lacking the somewhat wild flavor of *ophioscorodon* garlics. The most widely grown garlics in the world, softnecks can store well on the shelf, as long as six months to a year. When well grown, they can almost equal rocambole (hardneck) garlics in flavor.

Both subspecies (*sativum*, or soft neck

garlics, and *ophioscorodon*, or hardneck garlics) belong to the domesticated species called *Allium sativum*.

Species, subspecies, variety, sub-variety. Classifications important to biologists, horticulturalists, pathologists. Don't you worry about them. I don't. I pretend to be interested. I often confuse the terms when asked about them. See them, forget them. Eat the garlics, enjoy them all whenever you use them, however you use them.

Here in Occidental I grow mainly rocambole garlics, partly by accident, partly by choice.

Those scapes, or seedstalks, unique to rocambole garlics, shoot up at the center of the green leaves about seven to eight months after planting. They perform a tight coil shortly after they appear, and then, perhaps a week later, a second coil. The scapes lose all coils within a few weeks and stand up straight. By this time they have turned woody.

Other *ophio* strains have scapes that form random coils or broad sweeping curls, some that form arches rather than coils. Ignored, these scapes will produce seed heads at the top and those heads will open to show colorful blue/purple bulbils that are in some countries used in stir-fry foods or in salads. Replanted, these bulbils can (not *will*) produce thin greens which can be added to salads. Replanted each year for three or four years the bulbils *might* produce fairly substantial heads. If you've got the time, the garlic has the vigor.

The clove—not the head but the single *clove* from a whole head of rocambole garlic—is usually flat at the base. The tip of the clove, usually blunt, can vary in shape from plump-round (when well grown) to narrow wedge-shaped (when planted too early or grown in southern climates.) Most rocambole strains average six to eleven cloves to the head.

Subspecies. Variety. Now strains.

The truth is: technical jargon bores me. I'm not filled with scorn, as my father was (especially when my eldest brother, a botanist, spoke the language of the academic theorist); I'm just not interested in that part of the process. Hurrah for those who are. Hurrah, again, for those who prefer Gilroy's white garlics. I myself use it whenever the





supply of my own garlic is depleted.

But the biological history which defines the neat little adjustments by which the original wild garlics altered their shape and size and color just to survive do not interest me. I'm impressed that they (all garlics!) are here. They stink, therefore they *are*.

I'm pleased that I can duplicate my choice garlics with my own hands in my own soil. Without ever entering a laboratory to play with DNA or microscopes or test tubes. My eyes always glaze over when I am compelled to hear a professor lecture about the anatomy of a fruit fly. But again, for those who find such adventures fulfilling: sing Hosannas, let them eat garlic.

I am being slightly deceitful.

When I offer one of the peaches from a tree I planted as a bare root stick six years ago and I say "This is a Red Haven" or "This is a Babcock" or "This is a Strawberry Nectar," I have to admit I do enjoy the authority my guests grant me. I'm waiting for some Ph.D candidate to tell me, "This is not a Red Haven, sir. This is an O. Henry."

Like most farmers, I have learned in the field, not in the classroom. Today, here in California, as in Iowa and Mississippi, the sons (and daughters?) of farmers are getting college degrees in Agriculture and then in Business. Farming is not just business these days, it's big business. And BIG business is BIG money.

Small farming is small money. Often no money. I am identified as a small farmer in my tax reports. I get certain, very limited, tax breaks that help finance a couple tons of soil or extra sticks of redwood for my next few boxes.

Small farmer. Almost by definition a loser.

Hello, Poppa.

Of my thirty (thirty-two?) children, how dare I say I love one more than another? If tortured, I'd confess. Treated kindly, I'd confess. Without your even asking me, I'll confess.

Number one, of course: Russian Red Toch, which is a pale rose color. The *red* might refer to Communism, as in *the red flag*. (I hear my father screaming: "Skunks! Red skunks!") To quote Ron Englund at Filaree Farm on the quality of Russian Red Toch: "Raw taste described as perfect garlic flavor."

Number two, after Russian Red Toch? Several, all relatively unequal in their qualities: Creole Red from Louisiana/Mexico; Spanish Roja; then Inchelium Red, reputedly the oldest garlic in North America, discovered on an Indian reservation in the state of Washington; Acropolis, from Greece; Skuri (a purple stripe, raw flavor mild and earthy, from Russian Georgia) and Yugoslavian (large bulbs, copper veined, purple blotched, vigorous, strong aroma, hot and spicy at first, then a warm sweet aftertaste); Persian Star (originally from a bazaar in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, red tipped cloves, pleasantly mild with a zing of spice); Romanian Red (a *porcelain* variety, in my soil purple blotched like several Rocamboles, four to five cloves to a head, hot and pungent, healthy long-lasting bite, rich rich rich after bite fades), and Metechi (origin unknown, possibly Mexico or even Germany, cloves few and quite large, with thick blushed skins, long storing, very fiery when eaten raw but has a nice smooth finish, great for salsa).

And how can I possibly relegate to minority status Russian Georgia's La Panant Kari and Poland's Carpathian Red and Korea's Asian Tempest (with a mild flavorful taste when eaten raw)?

To the true garlic alliophile, garlic is not just to be grown, to be eaten, not even just to be tasted. It is, to the true alliophile to be *savored*.

Aristotle is correct. Garlic is a tonic. My special garlics, starting with Russian Red Toch, are special tonics.

Tonic: producing or stimulating physical, mental or emotional vigor. That in *Roget's Thesaurus*. I'll bet you that Roget, that wise old Frenchman, was an alliophile.

Alliophile: a person obsessed with the multitudinous glories of garlic.

The town of Bodega is seventy miles north of San Francisco, fifteen minutes inland from the Pacific coast.

In the spring the fog lifts from the surface of the ocean at dusk and rolls eastward, to hover over the green fields and the scattered herds of placid sheep and cattle. Then, as if sucking strength from the approaching darkness, the fog climbs the coastal hills to drift farther eastward, where, until sunrise, it set-

See [the biological terms], forget them. Eat the garlics, enjoy them all whenever you use them...

*To the true
garlic allio-
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to be savored.*

ties over Duncan's Mills and Monte Rio and northern Santa Rosa.

On those infrequent evenings when the fog fails to materialize, nature, abhorring vacuums, supplies a pattern of winds so cold that stray cattle seek each other out until ten or twenty or thirty, bunched together, find comfort inside their accumulated warmth. Only the smug snug thickly-coated sheep need not seek shelter behind a barn or behind outcroppings of huge rocks or within the sheltering groves of oaks or firs or redwood trees.

Native locals always have a sweater or jacket available should they be outside after five or six o'clock.

In April, as soon as the ground's willing to accept a spade, the ranchers around Bodega who want summer and autumn vegetables for their kitchens pull on their boots, take down their spades or attach the Rototiller blades to their tractors. Spade or blade digs deep to lift and flip the soil until there is a uniform blanket of loose loam that rarely needs even to be leveled before receiving seeds or seedlings.

In the country around Bodega, as around Occidental—in fact around just about every town in Sonoma County—Italian names prevail. The Orsi cattle ranch, the Petrini dairy, the Gonnella Restaurant, the Negri racing stables, Panizzera's Market. Frati or Fiori or Morelli Lanes. Donatelli Plumbing or Lunardi Electric or Calvi Construction.

The first Italians migrated to this part of northern California during the mid-to-late 19th century. They continued arriving well into the early twentieth. Peasants usually, seeking a better life in mythical America, they settled first in San Francisco and then, when the city reached its saturation point for Italians, subsequent boat and train and busloads of *contadini* traveled, or were sent, farther north, to the forest and fields, where they sought out now-established friends or relatives from their villages in the old country.

In Sonoma County thousands worked in the lumber industry, felling trees, converting wood into charcoal, mining, building railroads. Hoarded earnings eventually went into the purchase of land, which then expanded into cattle or dairy ranches or vineyards.

As more and more Italians arrived they

continued to endure an animosity, a contempt, which on the eve of the 21st century still echoes in our language. It is easy to forget that the scornful term *wop* was born at Ellis Island, where boatload after boatload of Italians arrived W.O.P.—without papers.

Dominic Albini owns the sheep-ranch in Bodega where I lived for ten years.

Dominic and his family live and work not in Bodega but on a second ranch, twenty minutes south of Bodega, at the edge of a coastal town called Valley Ford.

Dominic's grandparents, in 1848, once settled on the Bodega ranch, began what remains an unbroken tradition. In the fenced allotment of soil behind the gray barn—usually around the middle of May—the Albinis planted a variety of tomatoes, peppers, corn, carrots and *basilico*. When Dominic and his family lived there, before and after they moved to their Valley Ford ranch, they carried on the tradition.

In October, before the ground became hardened by winter frost, they planted a separate crop: garlic. In June, when the garden vegetables are beginning to show promise, the garlic is just about ready for harvest.

Dominic gets his garlic from a cousin who, on a 2000-acre ranch near Gilroy, produces thousands of tons of garlic every year. White skinned garlic, called either California Early or California Late.

The Albinis drive to their relatives' ranch in Gilroy in early September. The two families exchange their various foods and wines, share their stories about births and deaths, marriages, successes and failures with crops and animals, and then, after supper, Dominic drives the station wagon back to Bodega, his wife and family rewriting and rereading the stories of the day.

In the well behind the back seat of the station wagon are two mesh bags, each filled with twenty-five pounds of white garlic. Some heads will be stored, to be used in their food over the next several months, most will wait until October, when the white heads will be separated into cloves and the cloves will be planted in a fragment of that fenced and carefully nurtured space behind the barn.

Twice a year the garden's soil, covered with sheep and cattle manure, supplemented with cuttings of new green weeds, is

turned over, usually by Marty, Dominic's son, who brings in one of their smaller tractors. After almost a century of such attention the soil is so rich that, Dominic boasts, even the stones are growing bigger.

Few of the Albin children speak Italian but they all say *basilico*, not *basil*. They do not say *aglio*, they say *garlic*.

The image that the word *garlic* conveys to all of them is the image that came to their ancestors and comes now to shoppers and cooks all over the world: that turban-shaped root with white skin that adds both heat and flavor to all food except, perhaps, apple pie.

The garlic my father grew in western Pennsylvania, near a town called Butler, was never white. When pulled from the ground it appeared to be black. Its sooty, almost unhealthy appearance, I was sure, was simply a result of having nested in coal-befouled mud all winter and spring.

After being hung in the shade to dry and brought into the kitchen and freed of their outer skins, the exposed large heads, it seemed to me, could only have been dipped in red paint by a clever vandal with whom my father must have conspired.

For half a century, as I consumed the white skin garlics in homes or restaurants I, like millions of others, praised or criticized the—what shall we call it? The herb, the vegetable, the food.

Why did I wait almost fifty years, a half of one entire century, before I permitted myself—it was on the Albin sheep ranch in Bodega, California, on a cool day in mid-May in 1976—to remember my father's garlic, to recall, as if it were yesterday, my father bending over his garden, pulling the greens, liberating the root, sending the aroma of garlic into the warm summer air?

Late April, a few days after my arrival at the ranch, Dominic asked me if I wanted Marty to bring the tractor and disc a small patch in the field near the house for my garden. Everyone except me just assumed I'd want a summer garden.

Why not? One more soul-saving distraction. And the idea of raising my own vegetables appealed to me. I'd not worked in a garden since I was a kid. But how many tomatoes or peppers or ears of corn could one man eat?

"I'll dig up a little patch for myself," I

said, as if gardening were an ongoing experience.

"Well," Dominic informed me, "the ground's ready. You sure you don't want Marty to bring the tractor and disc it for you?"

The words *disc* and *tractor* suggested *acreage*. I had in mind a piece of earth half the size of my kitchen floor.

"Thanks, Dominic. I can do it."

"Plenty of tools in the barn," Dominic said. "I got some tomato plants left over. Other stuff too. Want them?"

"Sure, thanks. What do you have?"

He went down the list. I said I'd like a few tomato plants, a few peppers and some corn.

"Silver Queen corn," he said. Silver Queen, he assured me, was the best white corn in the world. His father and grandfather had planted Golden Bantam right there where I'd be planting my tomatoes. Too bad Silver Queen had not been available.

"And *basilico*. What's an Italian garden without *basilico*—?"

"I'm not Italian, Dominic."

"The house is," Dominic said, leaning against one of the porch posts as he must have done a thousand times in his childhood and youth. "The land too."

Dominic's great-grandfather had planted his first garden in 1850. In the subsequent 125 years there had been a garden in the same area every summer. Right there, next to the barn. Dominic's father was ten years old when *his* father built the fence that still kept out the deer.

This year, Dominic complained, would be the first year since 1850 no Albin would have a garden on this site.

I suggested that Dominic could adopt me. And I could change my name.

He grinned and shook his head. Maybe he'd take a small patch and plant some basil. The house would cry if it couldn't have *pesto* in the kitchen. "We scrubbed the walls," Dominic said, "but 125 years of *pesto*, well, we couldn't get rid of it. You smell it the minute you open the door."

"I'm adding to the smell, Dominic. I eat a lot of pasta. *Pesto*'s my favorite sauce."

"It is? O.K., then I don't feel too bad."

Dominic promised to bring the plants in two days. Tomatoes, corn, beans, *basilico*. Tomorrow morning he'd be here early. He

Garlic...the turban-shaped root that adds both heat and flavor to all food except, perhaps, apple pie.

*My neighbor
Dominic said,
"And basilico.
What's an
Italian garden
without
basilico—?"....*

and Marty and Brenda. They had to worm the ewes and dock the lambs' tails.

"You see that garlic growing right over there, in that corner? There's fifty stalks. Planted a hundred cloves last October. The gophers got fifty. If we're lucky, around June, we'll have forty maybe. I'll come over to help you dig it up. Then, next October, we'll start all over again. A hundred more cloves."

"So I'll have three months to eat fifty cloves of garlic?"

"Fifty *heads*. Each clove you plant becomes a whole head. Hey, I've used garlic two years after it was picked. This garlic's from my cousin's ranch in Gilroy. He's got two thousand acres, nothing but garlic. You taste this garlic, you'll never buy it in the market again."

"That's a lot of garlic, Dominic."

He clapped me on the back. "Hey, your hair's going thin. Garlic will bring it back thick again. Black. Look at my hair."

"Take off your hat, Dominic."

He laughed. "I mean the hair you can see."

"It's gray, Dominic."

"It is? Damn, Chester, you got any garlic in the house? I didn't have it for breakfast this morning."

The fifty garlic bulbs (California white) Dominic gave me yielded, after my greedy daily consumption, 100 cloves substantial enough to plant, more than enough to satisfy my needs.

I put the cloves into the earth in early October, forming them into a circle about twenty feet in diameter around the outer edge of the rectangular garden that had filled my summer and early fall table with Dominic's offerings of Beefsteak tomatoes and red and green peppers and *basilico*, and six rows (each ten feet long) of Silver Queen corn.

But surprises never cease and desist.

Late in the winter I received three catalogues offering the sale of seeds for rare vegetables. *Southern Exposure Seed Catalogue*, *Seed Savers Exchange Catalogue*, *Salt Spring Seed Catalogue* in British Columbia.

Man, it's karma, my Zen (and now) friends say.

Late April: in among Dominic's traditional

plantings went five varieties of tomatoes (Sweets 100s, Sweet Million, Sun Gold, Husky Red, Great White); and two pepper plants (Quadrati d'Asti Giallo, meaning yellow, and Rossa, large, bell-shaped, four-lobed, deep gold and red, and sweet); two rows of carrots (one Minicor, from Holland, and one Ingot-hybrid, which carries more than double the amount of carotene of most other varieties).

Without informing Dominic, I'd followed the recommendations of the catalogues for starting the seeds in potting soil in miniature plastic hot-houses inside my home. By April, when Dominic planted his seeds, my exotic seedlings were already inches high. And hearty, already prepared for outside weather.

I felt like an explorer rounding a corner on the ocean and finding palm trees where the maps showed not even land to be present.

When I put in the garlic cloves in October, just as the vegetables were disappearing, I'd not planned to plant them in a circle. It just happened. My mother talking?

Near the end of November, when the garlic tips began to push up out of the earth like sharp green dragons' teeth, Dominic, strolling over for casual observation of what was left of my nearly empty garden, said something I could not quite hear.

"Look at the way you planted those garlics," he said aloud. "What do you call those guys in the army? You know, they stand guard and blow their trumpets when the enemy shows up?"

"Guards?"

"No, no, no."

"Scouts?"

"Come on, you're a professor. The word makes me think of Central Bank."

"Central. Oh, sentinel?"

"That's it. Sentinels. Your garlics look like sentinels. No bugs or worms gonna get past them without a fight. Who taught you to plant that way? I never planted in circles."

Like that first hint of an emerging composition on a just-exposed Polaroid film, an image combining features and sounds crept alive in my eyes, my ears.

"My father," I said. The response had been immediate.

"Your father planted a garden? In circles? Where? Not in California."

"No, in Pennsylvania. Before that, as a child, in Russia. Actually in Georgia. He used to work in the garden with his father. His father planted a circle of garlic around his garden."

"Hey, Georgia's in America."

"Russian Georgia."

"Your father planted garlic?"

"He sure did."

"I never heard of a Russian Italian. Sure, I know other people eat garlic, but Italians, well, they invented it."

"He wasn't a Russian Italian. He was a Russian Georgian Jew."

"Jews eat garlic?"

"That Jew did. And this one."

As we leaned on the fence built by Dominic's grandfather I thought again of my own father, as I had that day a few months before, the morning I'd planted my tomatoes and peppers and corn and *basilico*.

But the vision was altered, more intense, more immediate. My months on this Bodega ranch had begun to redefine my memories of my childhood. Faces and voices and activities now contained sharper edges, fuller bodies.

Now I saw—through the loving eyes of a thirteen-year-old boy, not the eyes of a suspicious, even cynical, forty-five-year-old man—my father (short, stocky, bald) walking around his garden in Pennsylvania, my father (loose black sweater patched at the elbows, dirt-stained pants rolled up above his knotted shoe-laces) kneeling down to push a stubby finger into the soil to produce a hole, my father ("I plant for us, this land, this house, our garden, our own garden, *boy-chik!*) walking the circle again, this time settling into every moist hole a single garlic clove, flat end down, pointed tip up.

The garlic my father planted, I told Dominic, had red skin. I'd just remembered that. After the dirt had been dried and brushed away and the outside skins removed, the interior skins were rosy red.

Dominic shook his head. Garlic had white skin. What my father planted was probably beets.

He planted beets, I insisted, *inside* the garlic circle. He used to say that garlic fights off bugs and worms. His vegetables always won blue ribbons at the County Fair. The biggest *this*, the best *that*. He said his special spray helped as much as the garlic.

Special spray? Dominic was intrigued now.

"My father kept a stack of clean flour sacks behind the counter in the store. Every night he poured everything in the spittoons—cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, juices—into a flower sack and squeezed everything through the sack into a big jug. In summer and autumn he sprayed the plants with the stinking stuff once a week. I never saw a single worm."

One evening that summer, after I'd made a pasta with several cloves of garlic Dominic had given me (to hold me over until my own might be ready), I called Dominic to tell him I was worried. The leaves on my garlic stalks were going brown. Would the fifty-four garlics have evaded the gophers, only to be victims of my incompetence?

The next day, before we toured the hills in his pickup, Dominic stood at the fence and sipped the hot coffee I'd brought him.

"Nothing to worry about," he said. "Your garlic's talking to you. 'I'm not going to grow any more, Chester. Dry me off, Chester.' That's what it's telling you. 'Don't water me any more, Chester. In two or three weeks you can dig me up.' That's what it's saying."

Seventy-four garlic stalks, each of them as thick as my thumb, survived that winter of 1976 and spring of 1977. The gophers had taken the other twenty-six. In Valley Ford Dominic had lost more than half his garlic. "Next fall," he said, "I'm planting in a circle."

November.

About eight days before Thanksgiving, I had a call from John Harris, a former housemate and the author of *The Book of Garlic* (published under his official name Lloyd J. Harris). That book made garlic more popular than Andy Warhol.

For the unenlightened: the following information.

In the late 'sixties and early 'seventies John Harris had almost single-handedly shocked American cooks and eaters into an awareness of the neglected glories of garlic. Whenever you now read or hear about a garlic festival (and there are about fifty festivals every summer or fall somewhere in the United States), just remember: those festivals exist by the grace of John Harris. His

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"The house is," Dominic said, "and the land too."

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self-published *The Book of Garlic* won him local and national stature as a garlic guru. Actually *international*, the book having appeared in French, Spanish, German and Japanese. He has been legitimately saluted as the King of Garlic.

A few months after I left my wife I met John at a book-signing party. I was taken with his outrageous wit. Over the following months we met often at the Cheese Board, the first of the Berkeley Food Collectives, or at Chez Panisse or local cheap cafes.

John's initiating me into his daily ritualistic consumption of garlic won me an award foreign even to him: a distraction from thoughts about my broken marriage. Routed were the armies of resentment, remorse, guilt that had been attacking me since my escape from the twenty-year marriage.

I cannot promise such benefits to other similar victims, man or woman.

John wanted to know what I was doing in Sonoma County. "You making wine, I hope?"

"Hey," I said, "I'm growing garlic. Just planted it. But I still have a lot from my harvest last July."

"You're beginning to talk like a good old boy. Yeehaw!"

"Listen up," I said. "I still have a few choice tomatoes on the vine. Peppers too. And I've put up some mighty fine pesto. Come on up."

John arrived the next day punctually at two o'clock. Still handsome, concentrated, quite fit for a large man. And feisty. We ate our supper on the wide porch that wrapped around the ranch house. In the fields, in the dying light, sheep and cattle moved with that silent and almost enviable satisfaction visited only upon dumb beasts.

After the last glass of wine, John sat up and stretched. No lamps had been turned on inside the house. Our only light came from the crescent moon.

John said he better be getting back.

When I brought him ten stalks of garlic, he tore the head from one stalk. Not taking time to clean the dirt from the root hairs, he simply peeled the outer skin free with almost brutish skill and pried loose a single clove, which, skinned by teeth and thumb-nail, he consumed in three quick bites. All this action accompanied by rolling eyes and

groans: the sort of behavior usually assigned to a participant in one or more of the tender positions illustrated in the *Kama Sutra*.

I walked John to his car. "This," he said, breathing against the palm of his hand and inhaling, "this November day has been a day to remember."

I tossed the nine stalks (and the one head minus one clove) onto the front seat beside John, certain that before he reached Berkeley he would consume most if not all of the remaining cloves in the open head.

In my Freshman Writing class I often insisted that the students write about something completely outside the usual list of standard composition topics. I wanted them to struggle with material or experiences foreign to them, to their generation, such as Old Age or German Cabaret Music or Riding Sidesaddle. To pass, they had to use the library for research, which meant they had to enter the library, which meant they had to find it on the campus map, which meant they had to be able to distinguish north from south.

Exasperated one day at the predictability of their boring incompetence and/or uninterest, I blurted out, "Garlic! Write about garlic!"

The students stared at me as if they were Girl Scouts observing a serpentine cookie shedding its skin. "I want research, I want originality, I want imagination, I want clear, precise, correctly-written prose, I want to say, 'I wish I'd written this paper.' Give me three pages."

Two of the twenty papers were quite well written and provocative enough to receive a B and a B+. From one of those two (written by a daughter of a Gilroy garlic farmer) I even learned several tricks about the marketing of garlic and a few facts about family stability.

Six of the remaining eighteen papers consisted of the history of garlic, all taken, I presume, from the one agriculture encyclopedia in the library. The authors had tippytoed so close to plagiarism I warned them that a grade of C was a gift. Three of the remaining twelve papers were duplicates, all three writers spelling garlic *garlick* and two of the three papers submitted under the same name, meaning that whoever copied from the original even copied the original writer's name. Each



of those three papers received an F. The other papers received grades ranging from D to C+.

But three of the D papers contained appealing recipes for dishes served in the students' homes. I immediately tried them at Bodega. Knowing I would go on to include them in my permanent collection, I eventually, before the end of the semester, informed each of the three students why I was changing their D to C-.

I made copies of the three papers and offer here the recipes as written. At the end of each, I present, in italics, my slight and very personal alterations, if any. Please be patient, please don't yield to the temptation to edit (you'd ruin the recipe).

Brusell Sprout (sic)

Tak some brusell sprout and cut of root end. Cut in haf. Put in Fry pan. Put in littl olive oil. Put in sharp sweat mustard. Put in hot peppr jely. Mix up. Covur and steem til tendr. You cook them to long they go to soft. Serve hot. You got to like brusell sprout of corse. Put in garlick but not to much.

Do as suggested but keep testing the sprouts with a fork. The mustard I use is local, diJonish, sharp, with honey added. If you can find Jack Daniel's Mustard, use it! I use jalapeno jelly when possible or a cherry or berry jelly with hot pepper flakes added. All ingredients to your taste. Garlic? Use a light hand here or you'll overwhelm the mustard-jelly taste. Familiar at the time only with California white garlic, I used it. Now I use Inchelium Red from Washington, or Yugoslavian, which is hot at first but mellowes to a pleasant aftertaste. Estimate four to five Brussels Sprouts to a person.

Humus (sic)

Humus is made from chikpese. My granfathr comes from Lebanon and they eat lots of humus there. But its a lot of work my mom say. So she buys it from a markit in San Francisco sells things like Lebanon stuff. Then before we get it on the tabl my mother who like garlick a lot squeezes in a lot of garlick. I mean lotz. You eat my mom's humus you got to like garlick

Unlike my student's mother, I make my own hummus (chickpeas, tahini, olive oil, lemon juice). Into a pint of hummus I will add five or six cloves of a garlic that's not too (pardon me, I mean to hot. A Spanish Roja or a

French Messadrone. You like biting hot? Use two or three cloves of the standard California White, or, even better, two or three cloves of one of the Russian Georgian garlicks. Their heat disappears fast and a very strong earthy garlic taste remains. I do not chop or dice or slice, I use a garlic press.

Garlick (sic) Omlett (sic)

You like eggs a lot you take 3 eggs. You don't like eggs a lot you take two. Brake them. In a fring pan. Throw cells away. Befor you throw eggs in pan you throw them in a bole. You stir them with a fork. You add rosemary. Thats a herb. My dad grows it. You also add salt&pepper. You take three slices bread you use three eggs two slices bread you use two eggs. You break the slices bread into pices. You soak these pices in butter. Now you add lots garlick. My dad uses butter and olive oil half half. You add these soaked pices into bowl thats got your eggs stirrd. You pore everytheng in to hot fring pan that has a little oil. Olive. Fry. Stir. Let sit till side on bottom gets brown. Flip. Fry until that side now on bottom gets brown. Flip. Put on plate. Eat. Right away.

What can I say? I make this omelet for breakfast or for lunch. I always flip. The garlic I use here is either Spanish Roja or Creole Red for the rich rich taste. Use Mexican or Polish Carpathian Red or Leningrad and you'll do a double flip. Bake any garlic, four or five cloves per person, and squeeze the contents into the whipped eggs and your flips will be of Olympic proportions.

My late-in-life obsession with garlic developed slowly but with an intensity that sometimes gave me furry pause. Too often in my life my obsessions—with writing, with teaching, with politics (sometimes teaching and politics combined), with isolation—have stuffed my baggage with short-fused bombs. But the last twenty years of my life in Occidental, especially the last six or seven years, have been idyllic.

It was the garlic that did it. Starting with Mary Albini's garlic mashed potatoes and, almost accidentally, my students' recipes for garlic-Brussels Sprouts, garlic-omelet and garlic-hummus.

I say the garlic made my life ideal.
But I must add the land to the garlic.
Let's call it nature. □

*Seventy-four
garlic stalks
survived that
winter...
Gophers had
taken the other
twenty-six*



JEANNINE SAVARD

ELEGY FOR MY FATHER

Philippe Savard (Canada—1910-1992)

I.

You've come back standing under the skin
of a seal. The moon's cotton over your open hands.
I have nothing to tell but I listen
and listen—a set of teeth shakes down into snow.
The bird the Inuit have carved for you
rises out of my hands, closer to your eyes,
then closer to mine.

II.

I knew who you were from the beginning. I was happy
with the fish you laid at our feet,
my mouth wanted to take it in, white needles
and all. We did, and it brought up many other fish
—hunger was never really ours. I lay my hand
on the ground beside you and with the passing of a cloud
I've got a handful of river, a strip of ice
we've written on the back of, incorruptible.

III.

Coming up like a yellow fish into sunlight
from the underground cavern
I couldn't stop the weight of it,
your hand fallen hard into your lap,
a caribou hoof severed and tossed down
into the dry, frozen earth. You looked up at me,
wondering, I suppose,
if I saw it too or if it wasn't

too much to ask: *Will you take that part of me?*
Will you yet hold
your hand like a cloud
lapsing over all the days and nights



I did my best in
but it came out wrong? I said
 Yes, yes I will. I looked up from my walk

to a downpour of flowers, that magenta
 in the goggles of an ace pilot. The birds said,
 a fleeting red, a short recovery at dawn.

IV.

This is a good time. The leaves are falling
 mostly yellow and red. The geese follow
 the train I'm taking between
 our two countries. I'm taking you back
 to a last wish—buried in autumn
 next to your son. There was a field in the middle
 of all this, before or after the border crossing,
 it doesn't matter, but in it, a tractor with rags
 tied to the wheel. I didn't know it then but next
 when I saw the book open on my lap and a toothless brakeman
 smiling wide at me in the aisle, I knew
 the ground had been prepared, opened. There would be
 a small wind, a catch of light over the pond, some oak
 creaking like a gate without a latch to hold it.

V.

I don't drink anymore but there is a deep red wine
 on the dark table in the yard. Friends
 have gathered with a bundle of sticks,
 all the gray memories tied in their chests,
 waiting for me to light the match
 that will get them started. I love the blue
 hanging in the smoke, the same shade as the suit
 you wore to the clinic. The night before your journey
 South I tucked an owl feather in the inside pocket
 over your heart. North of us, your dearest lover
 and sisters will take in deep breaths tonight,
 they will gulp stars and the tracks of hunters
 on the edge of tundra, farther
 than the old village and depot, drunk,
 not snow-blind, but bound.

Adventure

Walk. Walk. Walk,” Smoothie says. “That’s the key. Don’t ever stop. Don’t ever call attention to yourself. Keep walking. Keep talking. Keep on moving, Sugar, cause when you moving, Sugar, you important. You got a destination. You going somewhere. But stay in one place, Sugar, now that’s dangerous. Stay in one place, Sugar, people notice that you’re standing there alone. Stay in one place and, Honey, people see you.”

Body

Every morning, get up early with the sun. Thaw my body like a piece of raw meat. Lick the tiny icicles formed on my knuckles. Smooth the goosebumps on my thighs with my thumb. Listen to the quiet murmur of graveyard termites in a marble wilderness. Squat to piss, the yellow trickles down my leg. Wait until the graveyard sprinklers click on. Wash my body and my clothes in the cold water.

Collection

Every morning, get up early with the sun and wake up Mosey. Breath in his mouth, in his nostrils, his ears. Lick the tiny icicles formed on his eyelashes. Smooth the goosebumps marking his thighs with my thumb. Massage his small chest so his blood stirs, stroke the black curls on his head. Scrub his clothes in cold water. Tell Mosey, Go play. Steal some food. Siphon gas. Smell, then sell the flowers lying on the graves. Walk around, collect cans. Follow the path of the sewer.

Destination

“An adventure, Mosey,” I said, placing a Davy Crockett coonskin cap on his head. “Live like pioneers. Live outdoors.”

“In the dirt?” he asked.

“Under stars,” I said.

Flesh

“Stars are the tombstones of the gods,” Smoothie says.

What gods? I wonder.

Says this while we’re rolling in the dirt, near a grave. Says this while he’s biting my neck. Points to red marks glowing on my breast. Says, That’s Cassiopeia. That’s Andromeda. That’s the little dipper. Sucks the little dipper.

God

Call him Smoothie cause his talk is smooth. Always talking, moaning, making noises. Makes me feel like fur is growing on my breasts.

Hero

Found me one day at Goodwill.

“You were standing near the bellbottoms buying underwear,” he says.

See him waving his hands in circles like a magician casting spells. See him stand in front of a fan, his long hair flapping like the wings of a raven. Hear him, crazy man, arguing with himself about the weather.

“You were standing near the bellbottoms buying underwear,” he repeats, and laughs.

Walks over to the underwear, winks. Calculates his exchanges like chess moves.

Said, “What you need those for, Peach?”

I like the sound of Peach. Sounds so fresh. See the word float above his head, taste it, large, ripe, sweet and juicy. Tells me he has flannel sheets that feel like peach fuzz, loves to rub the fuzz against his cheeks. Grabs my hand, leads me to the wigs.

“I bought you a blonde wig,” he reminds me. Rubs red rouge on my cheeks.

Says to me, “You look like Madonna.”

Walk to a mirror, imagine myself, jet set, wearing glass slippers, on my way to an Inaugural Ball.

He whispers, “Someday I’m going to paint your body.”

Icicles

Cold. Takes me home, a small abandoned shack. Shiver. Paint tubes pointy like icicles scattered helter-skelter on a table. Drinks from a large silver cup, his gobble, he says. Slurps the water, laps it up like a puppy, the water drips down his cheek, he has a dimple on his chin. Tells me about his ancestors, so and so and so and so, born and died, born and died. His mouth opens wide, see shiny gold crowns on his teeth. I am so damn thirsty, I think. My tongue is shriveled up, a sponge left outside in the sun. Okay, Mr. President. Don’t have time for this. Starts to paint a watercolor picture, tries to capture an image of my face on his wall. I lunge for the cup. He lunges for my lips. So chapped, he licks them, and they crack open.

An Odyssey

A Story by Kim Everett

Junkyard

"Thirsty?" Smoothie asks. Like a father, Smoothie wears boxers, limp and flimsy, around his waist. Peel them off with my teeth. Stretch out on his stomach. Smells like a bucket of cologne. With my lips, fish inside his boxers, cuddle his cock, a gorilla finger, stiff and poking, between my breasts, wet it with my tongue. Rub my fingernails through a forest of gray hair. Lick his cock, wet and damp like moss.

"Now you're safe, Peach," he pants.

Crank it hard, like a lever. Temblors of flesh. Swallow salty seeds of generation.

When he sleeps, crawl from his grasp. Gobble gobs of M&Ms. Search his garbage for some cans.

Knowledge

"Let's go out," Smoothie says.

Hold his hand, feel safer, try not to feel too close. "Walk. Walk. Walk," he says. Follow the clacking sound of a cadaverous man's cane. Pass a clown bouncing like my life on a pogo stick, holding a bouquet of colored balloons, blowing a kazoo; see the clown slip in mud. Watch a black balloon slither up into the sky. Hear a loud pop, turn to see the tattered pulp of a red balloon. Hear the clown laugh, Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!

Through a diner parking lot, walk. On the asphalt, see a layer of litter forming a collage. Follow the cadaverous man into the diner. Step into warmth. Sit snug in a booth. Wish I could sustain this feeling of marathon warmth.

Hear a man yell at a woman, shove a young girl toward her. "Just the weekend," he shouts, mutters *bitch*, then stomps out. Watch the woman pound her fists on the table, and mouth *bastard*. See the young girl drop her french fries on the floor, and her mother grab her by the neck and smear her face into the fries.

Spot our waitress, a redhead, her hair the flames of a wildfire dangerously out of control. Listen to her blabbering with the cadaverous man.

She says, "I had this great idea. I was in the girl's room thinking how I barely have any time to read but I'm always on the john, so why not do this? Publish toilet paper novels. Novels printed on toilet paper rolls. TP Novels: a new form of mass media. We could print up rolls from Homer to Hemingway. It might be a hit with constipated folks."

On the table, into open wounds, pour salt and pepper.

"And," the cadaverous man adds with a chuckle, "with some scholars."

On the window, near spider-web cracks, dab mustard thumbprints.

"And it would save paper," the waitress says, "and also reach a wider audience."

On the seat, dump ketchup, write *PEACH was HERE* on napkins. Whistle, and shout, Yoo-hoo!

"How about poetry?" the cadaverous man says. "Kids these days just can't read poetry. We could publish a modern interpretation of *The Waste Land*."

Invisible. Clink our knives and spoons against our water glasses. Waitress finally notices us. Takes our order, writes it down on a pad with a cobalt blue eyeliner. Order All You Can Eat. Stuff our plates with strawberries, bananas and kiwis. Watermelon. Cantaloupe. Honeydew. Hot roast beef sandwiches on rye with onions, horseradish, peppers, garlic, the works. Layers of brown, green, white and purple. A work of art, we sit and contemplate the swirl of colors.

With hot breath, Smoothie says, "Like the curls of Michelangelo's *David*."

The steam billows, smacks my face like a warm indoor shower, the heat like the summer sun at noon.

Museum

"Walk. Walk. Walk," Smoothie says. "Keep walking. Don't ever stop."

Walk around, follow the hustle and bustle of people, the flip-flop of sandals, downtown. Pass by a sculpture, a bust, covered with pigeon shit. See a boy and girl making Xs and Os on the sidewalk with chalk in a game of tic-tac-toe. Watch a white-faced mime create new space with his body. Over a bandstand, walk. Hear the sound of bells jingling. Witness a fender bender. Smell fish rotting. Backtrack. Stop to look at the fluorescent swirls of graffiti art. On the wall, lean. Hunched over, feel the arch in my back. Massage a deep ache, a wild-fire, spreading through my back. Watch the artist breathe life into concrete. Listen to a man and woman yelling, ping-pong, back and forth at each other. Watch the woman tear a piece of paper in half. Pick up half, see a bloodstained thumbprint. See a window decorated with colored lights. Shoved from behind, a man grabs my bag, zigzags, watch the cans scatter helter-skelter on the sidewalk, drops the bag in a little river in the gutter. Rescue bag, a little soaked on the bottom. Feel pain. On fire. Try not to fall apart. Maintain. Gobble M&Ms. Search the trash, find a flannel shirt, a comic book, a yo-yo for Mosey, for me, a packsack and some rags for monthly bleeding. For someone else a Zenith TV and some horn-rimmed glasses. Also, find a Mason jar to store my M&Ms.

Feel a hot stream on my face. My eyes sting. Look up, see a row of men perched above on a ledge, pissing. As if I don't exist. "Meoooww!" they purr. As if I am a pussy. So many people want to put me in a cage, or a cardboard box. Watch the piss trickle on the earth, form the letter V, imagine a seagull, flapping its wings, soaring above.

Angry. Spit on the shadow of a ruddy-faced woman.

Crush her silhouette with my foot. Watch a snail climbing over gravel boulders, the navy blue letters KE from a Snickers wrapper sticking to its shell. Watch it plot a path, avoiding wet islands, to a rain-filled Coca-Cola can. Bend over for can. Bend over and peel off the letters KE from its shell. Feel raindrops splashing on my hair and my tongue. Pause. Follow a fat shadow into a museum. Hear a woman with painted hair and a face smooth as plastic say to leave my bag at the door. Hesitate. Stuff my pockets full of cans, fold the bag into a smaller rectangle and carry it inside. Look around at the walls, amazed. Rainbow colors dancing on the walls in a collage. Study a map of the museum. Spotlights shine on a collection of urns, lined up by height. Rain drips from my forehead into a pudgy urn. Waddle and slosh toward a pasture on a wall filled with cows.

Nipple

So real, this painting. Her nostrils are the size of nickels, I believe. I step back, squint. Curl my thumb, my middle finger into a doughnut, peer through the hole of air. Her eyes, the size of quarters, I decide. Such a fat juicy cow, Big Mac haunches, I drool. I want to eat her, milk her. I step forward, trace my tongue on the painting, and spit. Not so real, after all. Spit dribbles like a bubble from the cow's nipple.

Pregnant

A junkyard, this museum. Parts of cars scattered like brittle puzzle pieces. Crushed fenders, smashed hoods, tailpipes severed like placentas after childbirth, strips of coiled metal shiny like a coat of armor.

"This is Art," a young man declares, whistling.

Smells like a station wagon.

Clicks his heels together, leather boots, three or four times.

Young man smiles. Shiny teeth like bits of shattered glass. Young man circles, snaps his fingers, talks a lot. Big words stretch his mouth wide like a braying donkey.

"I wish I could make a necklace of the shattered glass," he whispers in my ear, grazing my nipple with his fingernail.

The shattered glass shines. I see a speck of blood on the glass. Bend down, touch the tip. Prick my finger, it bleeds. The speck grows larger.

Young man confides, "Once, I saw an exhibit of the skeleton of an infant born with two hearts."

Two hearts? I think, listening to my own beat.

Look at a picture drawn by Mosey. See V-shaped birds scattered helter-skelter over a crayon-gray sky, and myself in the lower left hand corner, lying down. No lemon-yellow sun, no smiley-face. The sun Mosey drew is center stage and darker, with a jack-o'-lantern grin.

"Ominous," Young man says. Studies the picture,

rubs the stub on his chin, then mutters, eyeing me head to toe, "The person who invented stick figures had a kind heart."

Young man keeps hands in his pockets. Walks to a wall of lines, curves meandering like a city street. Traces lines with his finger:

MODERN CITY

Reads the sign out loud, thinks I can't read. I nod, stomp on his leather boot.

Young man thinking. Stares at sand, an orchard of aluminum cans.

Through a sandbox, drag my feet. Crush three aluminum cans with my foot. Stoop down to pick them up, put in my bag. Cans don't budge. Pry with my fingernails. Kick them.

Angry man. Screaming man. Ugly man. Moans. Pinches my arm, hard. Tears at my throat, a falcon with talons. Bigwig. Yells, "Out!"

Sigh. Long time I stand, stare at cans.

Quake

Mosey dumps a bag of cans near my feet. Licks the dirt from his palms.

Turn my head, ruin the pose.

"Peach!" Smoothie yells, flicking paint in my hair.

I start to count the cans.

Smoothie says, gnashing his teeth, "Just sell the boy." He gnaws on my neck. Mouth smells of Gin.

Mosey's face, white as a ghost.

"Mosey, go play," I say, wishing I could comfort him, stroke my hand through his hair, protect him from drowning from this numbness.

Mosey scrubs his face, takes off his coonskin cap, smooths his hair.

"Where's the money, kid?" Smoothie says, thrusting his pelvis.

Mosey stares down at his bare feet, closes his eyes.

"Oh, a wild man," Smoothie says and brays. He stretches a rubber with his fingers, snorts, and blows air into it 'til it pops.

Grabs my wrist, asks me about Mosey's father. Feel numb, shut self off. Hug body, clamp mouth, feel strong; feel weak.

Mosey strings a yo-yo on his middle finger, plays Round-the-World.

Smoothie yanks my hair, rips off my shirt, tickles me with paintbrush bristles. Paints my eyebrows, polishes my fingernails. Tugs my pants at the seams and asks me, "What's your un-zip code?" Dabs some red paint on my belly.

Notice specks of red in my underwear.

"Brilliant," he says, watching the paint trickle.

Mosey kicks Smoothie in the shin, and Smoothie yelps.

Ruins

Wake up, wash the watercolors from my body. Memories.

"Little punk," Smoothie hisses, touching his teeth. Hisses, Mosey stole the gold crowns from his teeth while he slept. Runs outside to search for Mosey.

Walk around, search for cans in the rain. Splash in puddles. Follow umbrellas and crowd of bundled people indoors. Room is warm, a womb. White walls and red carpet. People sit down, rest their chins on their hands. Rows and rows of faces, lined up, white as marble. Only seat left, on the stage, behind the standing man. Raindrops slide off my face onto the stage. Sign my initial in water. Munch on M&Ms. Man says he is a Poet. Name of Filly. Filly Levine.

My view: A bony ass, flat as a pillow in a cheap motel. His voice is loud, talks into a mike wrapped like a bridle around his neck. Hope he doesn't jump off the stage. Dangle like a gaudy earring.

There's a shadow on the paper he's reading, looks like a painting of the Eiffel Tower. Talks a lot about Detroit.

"You Can Have It," Filly reads. He gulps a glass of water like a camel.

Yeah, I think. That's how I feel.

I rest my head on the stage, dizzy, watch the tower wiggle. Upside down, the tower is an open fly.

Shelter

Hide behind a marker. Smell the sweet rich scent of uncut grass. Watch a waitress walk into the graveyard, afraid, holding house keys in between her fingers just in case. Look up at the sky, a canvas of dark clouds, the canopy over my head. Look up at a wall of pines, and one large cypress, sheltering the graveyard. On a pine tree, see the initials KP carved in a heart. Trace the letters with my ring finger. Marvel at the silent beauty of the mausoleum on a hill, architecture of smooth lines and marble veins, milky white like my belly. At its farthest edge, see its walls crumbling, wonder was it damaged by an earthquake? Examine a coat of arms displayed on its side. Think some rich family from the nineteenth century entombed inside. See a stained glass window, different colored shards of glass, shattered on the earth. Read the markers, witty epitaphs, rhymes that impart wisdom to you, the passerby.

Open my jar, sort M&Ms by color, line up in a row. Eat the light browns, the yellows and the greens. Munch on the dark browns. Drop an orange one on a grave. Get bored, turn one upside down. Eat W&Ws.

Notice a grove of markers without names. Wipe the name PEACH in melted chocolate on a blank marker. Think how from far above the green lawns could be mistaken for a park or a golf course. Remember cousins in the

South who used to walk in graveyards to relax. Realize this is California: Death is not in vogue. Feel a raindrop trickle on my face. Watch a funeral procession end, a mass of people seeking shelter under a bouquet of black umbrellas, and a ruddy child opening up one with the colors of a rainbow. Watch the pallbearers slide in mud and wonder if the graveyard will flood. See a cadaverous man with a clacking cane. Read his lips as he recites poetry, so sad. Through his poems, learn his past. Gather he's reading to a young daughter, drowned in a river. Read the name on the marker: Anne Winston 1932-1939. Listen to his sorrow and understand the man. Before he leaves, watch him drop a pink piece of paper folded in the shape of a swan on the grave. Pick it up, unfold, read his private grief. Want to tell him my story. Wonder if he'd listen, understand.

Tower

Smoothie undresses me, soaks my body with water. "Rub-a-dub," he says. Sponges my hair. Rubs the fur of a coonskin cap over my body. Aroused, washes my body as if I am a child. Strokes the goosebumps, tries to read them like a cookbook, a map. Studies my body as if it's a puzzle, trying to piece me together.

Paints on the surface of my skin: blades of grass, dumb pebbles, ripples of water, clouds. Says he's covering my flaws.

"Stay in bed," he says, tired of painting. He rests his head on a pillow, strokes my navel, closes his eyes.

Listen to snores. With my thumb and middle finger, pry open his right eyelid. Bend close to his eye. Try to see images of women dancing in a dream across the shiny ballroom of his pupil. As expected, find a woman, breasts inflated, stained on his eyeball. Angry, pluck out three of his eyelashes. Let the lid drop when Smoothie moans and rolls over in bed.

Underwater

Smoothie paints watercolor waterfalls on my skin.

"My masterpiece," he says, smacking his lips. "I have to show this to people."

Water gushing, flowing, fluid. Paints swollen rivers, sapphire water, which course in the path of my arteries. Covers veins bulging from my legs, swirls shades of blue between my legs. Circles my body with streams of paint, a shield of armor. Traces my curves with his tongue, the colors bleed.

Like being something, existing. "Will you paint me with oils?" I ask.

Tells me to lie flat on my back on a table. Rest my head on a satin pillow. Feel like a patient about to be dissected.

Smooth my belly, gaze into his eyes. "Let me paint you," I say, touching his chest.

"Lose some weight, Peach," Smoothie says.

Angela Sorby

Weather at Ten

The circle that rests closed in itself and, being substance, holds its moments, is the immediate and therefore not perplexing relation.

—G. W. F. Hegel, *Preface to Phenomenology*

It has been snowing for a long time, longer than winter.
If my ears were shells, I'd hear the ocean, frozen in mid-roar.
What does it take to peal? The Baptists on 55th import
Bell-ringers from the Netherlands who boom

Out Bach, though once they rang *Ring*
Around the Rosies, recalling the circles children
Form to play death by pox. But mostly in Bach,
As if his notes were steps to steady us as we cross

The ice, though music's neither boat nor bridge.
Six blocks away from me, in Harper Library,
You read yourself invisible, burying your eyes
In Hegel. All the bulbs in the yard are frozen

Solid, like millionaires entombed in ice
Waiting to melt back into life. Our tulips
Will be freaks if they bloom. Even when I sleep
In your bed I am not in your room.

Wake

Cold hands. Poking. People touch me, see if I am
real. Should I look at these people? or just imagine I am
elsewhere? My marble belly slopes like a crescent moon.
My breasts are sore and leak. Young boys stare. Young
girls stare. Body quakes. Faces bend close to my face.
Close my eyes. Tired, feel my skull press against my
skin. Feel as if I've fallen, become someone else. Smell
cologne. Feel dizzy. Footsteps pass, hear whispering and
shuffling of feet. Smell melted butter on popcorn.

Smoothie touches my nipple with his fingernail,
arouses me.

"Incredible, Mr. Smothers," a woman says. "A paint-
ing that lives and breathes." She puts some money in
Smoothie's collection jar.

Smoothie reaches for the woman's hand. "I call it
Niobe's Lamentation," he announces. Tears flowing
from solid rock.

"A painting that escapes the boundaries of art," a
man says, whistling. He drops a twenty in the jar, then
traces a river with his lips.

See gold crowns lined up in a row by size on the win-
dowsill.

I wake.

Sit up, slap the man's face. Smoothie grabs my
hands and pins me to the table.

"Stop. Don't move!" Smoothie yells. "Don't
ruin this."

Encircles his arms around me in a yoke. Pounds
my head against the table. Kicks my belly, hard.
Stream of red gushes down my legs, escaping
boundaries.

Underwater, I am drowning.

X

Draw a map, mark it with an X, plant it. Marker
for a child's death.

Yo-Yo

"Walk. Walk. Walk," Smoothie says. "Don't
ever stop."

Walk around, search for cans. See a woman,
sorting through my trash. "Poacher," I hiss, chas-
ing her away, throwing cans at her. Do I need to
point to my piss marking my territory?

Wash my clothes. Wash Mosey's clothes.

Zenith

Into a diner, wander. Wait for the cadaverous
man. Hear a man yell, "Waitress, get your ass over
here!" Watch the waitress rub her name tag with
her middle finger.

"Where's my apple pie?" he asks.

"You ordered it with cheese," she reminds him.

"It takes one minute to melt cheese in the
microwave."

"It's been more than a minute, bitch."

The waitress bites her tongue, but can't remain com-
pletely quiet. "That the way your mama taught you to
talk to ladies?"

He cranes his neck. "Don't see no lady. Thirty-five,
thirty-six, thirty-seven, thirty-eight," he chants.

See the cadaverous man enter, motion to him. Our
eyes meet. He doesn't look away.

Watch the waitress dump a hot pot of coffee on the
angry man's lap. "Freshly brewed," she says, and walks
away.

In sleep a doctor gives me a jar, tells me, "Fill this
with your fluid."

Yellow piss, I wonder.

Touches my face, says softly, "Bring me a cup full of
tears."

When I wake, smooth the goosebumps on my thighs,
dress in layers, feel the arch in my back as I weave
through the graveyard markers searching for my missing
jar of M&Ms. □

Bobby called his wife La Rosa Luminosa, but that was before.

They were married in Chicago but moved to Benton Harbor where Bobby worked for Zenith. Bobby said that Harriet didn't have to get a job. She could work on her novel. Instead, she had two children and wrote a weekly column for the Benton Harbor paper called Harriet's Hints. Even into her thirties she had very white skin with a tinge of pink and fine blond hair that flew all over her head. La Rosa Luminosa: the luminous rose.

Her children, a son and a daughter, inherited her hair: nearly white and unmanageable. The doctors had a name for it: Bent Hair Syndrome. It was a more important word than "messy." "It's like an angel's hair," Bobby would say. "It shows their blessedness."

Nothing in Bobby's life had seemed as wonderful as his marriage to Harriet. She was the garden it was his duty to tend. He had first seen her in a journalism class at University of Illinois at Chicago Circle. He had followed her back to her apartment and sat outside until she noticed him. She had another boyfriend at the time but he couldn't compete. One night Bobby slept outside her door and she found him in the morning, cheerful and eager to serve her. She personally didn't know what the fuss was about. She had never thought of herself as blessed. She wanted to be a reporter and see the seamy side of life.

Her columns helped women cope with their kitchens, their house-keeping chores, their gardens. One week it was dripping faucets, the next it was Japanese beetles. She wrote the column because the managing editor wouldn't let her cover fires and homicides and abused children. Now and then she would do an article on the activities of the Benton Harbor Women's Guild or the Flower Society. Harriet was a small woman: petite. Both of her children had been C-sections. Bobby would look at her belly and his throat would constrict. The white line of the bikini cut—this is what he had done to her. He saw it as her only flaw. Harriet liked her scar and the hardness of her skin there.

When Harriet was thirty-two, Bobby bought her a dog: a Doberman by the name of Diablo, a two-year-old watchdog with a strong sense of purpose. Diablo didn't play with the children. Toss a ball and Diablo wouldn't even look at it. If he could have stood around with his arms crossed, he would have done it. He growled in his sleep.

A Mexican family had moved into the neighborhood. They were cheerful and middle class but the father had a gold tooth and Bobby didn't like that. He didn't say he had bought Diablo because of the Mexican family but he spoke of changes. The mail was delivered through a slot in the front door and every day Diablo tore it up. When guests came over or the children's friends, Diablo would have to be shut in the basement. One could hear him making warning noises through the floor and grinding his teeth. No visitor stayed in the house for long. Harriet asked Bobby to get rid of Diablo but he refused. "You're my treasure," he said. "I am terrified of something happening."

Out on the Water

A Story by Stephen Dobyns

The children had a cat named Mousy and Diablo killed the cat. He broke Mousy's neck with a single swipe of his jaws. Diablo had black ears that pointed forward. They looked sharp. Diablo was the kind of dog

that would have liked to have had a tattoo. He always had an agenda.

"I want you to get rid of the dog," Harriet said one night. It was spring and they sat on the patio in their shirt-sleeves. From inside came the sound of the television. The children didn't seem to play as much. Diablo hated sudden movements.

"He's your protection," said Bobby. He admired Diablo. If he were a dog, he would be just like him. Diablo sat by Bobby's chair but he didn't want to be patted. He found it distracting.

"I don't need protection," she said.

"The city's changing."

"Things always change."

"I couldn't live if anything happened to you," said Bobby.

Harriet started to speak, then remained silent. Her clothes felt too tight although she was exactly the same weight as the day she had been married eleven years earlier: one hundred and five pounds. She had once written a column called "How to Make your Dog your Friend." What a sham it had been. It was her duty as a journalist to tell the truth. When she tried to give Diablo tasty tidbits, he refused. He was the only dog she had ever known that wouldn't eat between meals.

Two days later Bobby found Diablo dead in the basement.

"Stress," Harriet said.

The vet said that Diablo had been poisoned.

"I bet somebody threw something over the fence," said Bobby. "A poisoned rabbit."

"I don't want another watchdog," said Harriet.

Bobby bought a rust-colored cocker spaniel by the

name of Rags. He barked a lot and peed on the rug. Bobby also bought a nine-millimeter pistol and learned how to shoot it. Then he taught Harriet to shoot as well. They would take the pistol to the indoor firing range down near the lake and shoot at paper targets of marauders and housebreakers.

"Aim for the whites of their eyes," said Bobby.

Harriet liked how the pistol would kick in her hands when she pulled the trigger. Bobby bought her a little .22 pistol with a pearl handle. "A lady's gun," he said. Harriet preferred the nine-millimeter. The lady's gun was no fun at all.

Harriet wrote a Household Hints column on change. "At times a new wind blows into your life. At times you wake up in the morning and feel like a different person. Your family isn't sure if they know you any more. These changes are perfectly normal, no matter what anybody says."

Bobby put a bigger chain link fence around the backyard. Sometimes he took down the license plate numbers of cars that drove slowly past the house. "La Rosa Luminosa," he said to Harriet, "how I cherish you."

"My pantyhose feel too tight," said Harriet.

When Harriet bought a motorcycle, Bobby believed he would go crazy. It was a small motorcycle: a Honda 250. It was painted bright red like a fire engine.

"You'll kill yourself," said Bobby.

"Don't be silly," she answered.

Whenever she drove it, Bobby followed in the big Ford Fairlane station wagon flashing the headlights so people would stay out of her way. She rode it to the newspaper, about ten blocks from their house. People stopped when they drove past. It was like a parade. Even with a helmet, strands of her blond hair would fly around her face—that's how out of control it was.

Bobby had bad dreams about the motorcycle. He would moan for half the night and suddenly jerk awake. He had seen State Police Driver Education Films and knew what could happen. There had been pictures of people flung up into the telephone wires and hanging in the semi-dark. Bobby would lie on his back and watch the little red lights on the smoke alarms flicker. Bobby had more smoke alarms than Buckingham Palace. He could feel Harriet sleeping beside him. He would wonder where she went in her dreams and if she looked out for herself. He wished he could follow her into her head. He felt angry that she excluded him.

In the mornings he would say to her, "Won't you please get rid of that motorcycle?"

"I like it," Harriet would say. She made oatmeal for everybody. Bobby wouldn't let eggs into the house anymore.

The children liked the motorcycle as well. They begged for rides. Hank was ten. He would sit on the motorcycle in the garage and go, "Room, room!"

"Get off of that!" Bobby would shout. "You could fall."

Little Betty, who was five, would polish the two side mirrors and stare at her reflection. "I look prettier here," she would say. She would beep the horn and smile like an angel.

They had a ranch house in a nice subdivision. Bobby bought security cameras. From the monitors mounted on the kitchen wall, he could see every inch of his property. He had more monitors in the basement hobby-room where he worked on his stamp collection and butterfly collection. He had a Monarch butterfly in a Lucite half-sphere. The butterfly had its wings outstretched and seemed to be flying, but it wasn't going anyplace. Bobby hired a portrait artist and paid ten thousand dollars to have portraits painted of Harriet and the two children. He hung them in the hall so they were the first thing anyone saw when they entered the house. Sometimes Bobby would have Harriet stand next to her portrait and he would compare them. Bobby began to have stomach pains. After a while he went to the doctor. He was getting an ulcer. He thought of his body changing: the cells that replaced themselves every seven years. Nothing was dependable.

One day in the fall when Bobby was returning from work his foot slipped from the brake to the accelerator as he was entering the garage. The oversized Ford Fairlane leapt forward and crushed the little red motorcycle against the rear wall. Harriet heard the noise and came running. She looked at the bent frame of the Honda 250 as Bobby stood scratching his head. She didn't accuse him of doing it on purpose. He would only deny it. She knew he believed it was an accident. "I guess that takes care of that bad business," said Bobby.

That evening at dinner, she asked him about his job. He was an engineer and worked on portable computers. "They may sell the whole thing to the French," he said. "Jesus, what have the French ever done?" As a kid, Bobby had built Heathkits: radios and stereos. Transistors and circuit boards had killed that business. Sometimes he would still read the old instruction manuals before he went to sleep. The steps were so clear! As long as you could solder, the whole world lay open before you.

"Do you think you're working too hard?" asked Harriet.

"I'm just struggling to keep up," he said. They were having pot roast with potatoes and carrots and onions. The children pushed the onions to the sides of their plates. Harriet's blond hair surrounded her face like a halo. The children's hair made little halos. Bobby couldn't believe how lucky he was. "Chew your food carefully," he told the children.

"Maybe you should change your job," said Harriet.

ILLUSTRATION OSIE L. JOHNSON, JR.

Bobby couldn't imagine it. "Zenith is part of my life."

"Then let's go on a vacation. Let's go to Mexico."

Bobby considered his anxiety about the one Mexican family moving into the neighborhood. He asked himself what a whole nation of Mexicans would do to him. "I don't know," he said. "I don't think so."

"We could go to Disneyland," said Hank.

Bobby had an immediate visual image of his son tumbling out of a roller coaster. "I don't think so," he said. "Anyway, it's fall. It's the wrong season for a vacation."

"There's Columbus Day weekend," said Harriet. "We could go to Chicago. The kids have never been to the Art Institute or the Natural History Museum."

"Dinosaurs," said Hank in the tone of voice that he might have said "Holy men."

Everything in Bobby's nature rebelled about a trip to Chicago. Although he had spent six years there as a student, he had left ten years ago. The paper was always full of terrible things happening in Chicago. It seemed to Bobby that places like Chicago were necessary because they drew the terrible things of the world to them. If it weren't for the Chicagos and Detroits and Toledos, the terrible things would be spread out evenly across the entire country and it would be much worse for everybody else. Such places were collectors of badness. It seemed sheer lunacy to go there.

Harriet and the children kept asking. Bobby was confronted with his desire to please his family and his desire to protect them. At last he made a reservation at a hotel right on Michigan Avenue. They would drive down on Friday after school. Bobby wouldn't take his family up to Old Town and they would stay out of the Loop except for the daylight hours.

Piloting the Ford Fairlane through the traffic on Lakeshore Drive, Bobby kept the doors locked and both hands on the wheel. He was careful not to make eye contact with other drivers. He parked in the hotel's underground garage and when he reached the lobby, he was breathing hard. The kids kept wanting to run off in separate directions. "Explore," was the word they used. For Bobby it was a word as dangerous as *Cocaine*. A bellhop carried their bags to a non-smoking suite on the twelfth floor.



Bobby made him show them the fire exits, then tipped him five dollars. He wanted the bellhop to respect him but not find him slavish. The bellhop didn't appear to notice.

Harriet helped Bobby unpack. "You brought your pistol?" She was surprised to see it at the bottom of his overnight case.

Bobby removed the nine-millimeter and put it in a drawer by the bed. "You can never be too careful," he said.

It was late and they had dinner in their suite. The kids had a room overlooking the lake and Bobby made sure the window did not open. Harriet ordered a bottle of champagne. After the kids were asleep, she popped the cork and said, "I want to be wild." They made love. Her hair kept whipping across his face. Bobby felt nervous and kept his eye on the door the whole time. After she fell asleep, he grew relaxed. He had a glass of champagne and wandered around the suite. He went to the kids' window and looked out at the lake. There was an orange glow from Michigan Avenue and the surrounding buildings. The honking of cars was very muted. Far out on the lake a light was twinkling. Bobby thought how lonely it must be out in the darkness away from one's family and loved ones. He imagined sailing alone under the stars and being filled with longing and confusion.

Saturday they went to the Art Institute and the Natural History Museum. The children kept saying how big everything was. Harriet loved the Impressionist paintings: the breasts of the Renoir women and their gauzy fabrics. In the evening they saw *Guys and Dolls* and the kids fell asleep before the intermission. The singing was not like rap singing. Afterward they took the kids back to the hotel and put them to bed. An elderly woman came up to the room to baby-sit. She had pink cheeks and her white hair was collected in a bun on the top of her head. Her name was Mrs. MacDonald. Bobby and Harriet went out to dinner to a steak house on Wabash where they had gone several times during their engagement. It was drizzling and they wore tan raincoats. Bobby didn't like the sidestreet and kept urging Harriet to hurry. She wore high heels and walked as fast as she could. She loved how the buildings disappeared above her in the fog.

They had turf and surf and a bottle of Chateaufort-du-Pape. The headwaiter was the same man who had been there twelve years before. That made Bobby very happy. Bobby asked the man if he remembered them and he said he thought he remembered Harriet's blond hair. Briefly, Bobby imagined revisiting all their old haunts and finding the same people doing the same things. He imagined living the same minute over and over. He imagined reliving his wedding day again and again. For dessert they had

Baked Alaska and two Remys. It was nearly one o'clock before they left. Bobby wanted to take a cab but Harriet insisted on walking. It was only four blocks. She wanted to clear her head and feel the cool drizzle against her face.

It was when they were walking up Madison that it happened. A man came out of an alleyway: a large black man and he staggered between the curb and the building. "Hey!" he shouted. A street light was out. The man stood between them and Michigan Avenue. There were no cars.

"Get back," said Bobby and he pushed Harriet behind him.

"Hey, man, I want you," said the black man.

"He's drunk," said Harriet.

"It's a trick," said Bobby.

"Hey, man, I need something," said the black man. His face was almost invisible. Only his teeth showed.

"Go back where you came from," shouted Bobby. "Leave us alone!"

The black man swayed back and forth. He was about ten feet away. "Hey!" he shouted again. He began fumbling for something in his pocket. He took a couple of steps toward Bobby.

Bobby drew the nine-millimeter pistol from his waist and fired three times. The black man cried out and fell to the sidewalk. The gunshots reverberated up into the darkness.

"Oh, Jesus," said Harriet.

"Don't get near him," said Bobby. "It's not safe."

They stood in the drizzle as the black man twisted on the sidewalk, moaning and clutching at himself. Bobby held the pistol with both hands and looked up and down the street. He heard Harriet sobbing behind him. After a while the police came.

The sergeant's name was Lucas. He took away Bobby's pistol. "You shoot some drunken panhandler because he wants a quarter? You fuckin' crazy?"

They were in a precinct station. Harriet sat in a chair with her face in her hands. "He was reaching for something," said Bobby. "He had a gun."

"He had fuckin' nothing," said Lucas. "He had a fuckin' card saying he was a vet."

"Will he die?" asked Harriet.

"He's got a hole in his leg. He won't walk good anymore. He has a hard enough time being a crazy drunken vet and then some out-of-towner has to go and shoot him."

"We can give him some money," said Bobby.

"It's too fuckin' late," said Lucas.

They drove back to Benton Harbor on Sunday. The kids kept asking what had happened but neither Bobby nor Harriet wanted to talk about it. Bobby would have to come back to Chicago but it was unlikely that charges would be pressed.

"If I was the fuckin judge," Lucas had said, "I'd handcuff you to that old bum for the rest of your life."

Bobby kept trying to talk to Harriet but she wouldn't look at him. "La Rosa Luminosa," he said. But she looked out the window at the fruit trees and felt glad that winter was coming on. Bobby kept reimagining the bum digging into one of his pockets and staggering toward him. He tried to find a reason for what he had done. He found many but none that he liked. He thought of his marriage and graduate school, of taking the job with Zenith and buying the house in Benton Harbor. He thought of the life he had imagined as stretching before him and how it was different from the life he had now and how he would never have imagined shooting a defenseless person.

When they got home, Harriet went to bed. Bobby sat in front of the TV and watched football but he wasn't paying attention. He watched the men in their tight uniforms banging their bodies together. Now and then one of the players would be carried off the field on a stretcher. The children were in the backyard with Rags. Sometimes he heard one of them shout. It didn't occur to him that Hank had fallen from the apple tree or that Betty had twisted her ankle. Often Bobby found the ads on TV consoling. They presented a world of exact value. But this Sunday afternoon he paid no attention. In his hand he kept feeling the kick of the pistol. He wondered where the other two bullets had gone.

On Tuesday morning Harriet went to the beauty parlor and had her hair cut short. Then she had it dyed black. She also had four more earrings put into her right ear. When Bobby saw her that evening, he couldn't speak. He felt his voice had been ripped from his throat.

"Neat, mom," said Hank. "Punk."

Bobby went downstairs to his butterfly collection and wept. The hobbyroom had gray cinderblock walls and a green rug like Astroturf. He looked at his Monarch butterfly in its little Lucite dome. He thought how Snow White had been placed in a glass coffin by the seven dwarfs and how she had remained beautiful and unchanging. When the prince showed up on his horse to wake her, why didn't the dwarfs chase him away? Bobby began to think of himself as a dwarf, even smaller than Betty. But he wasn't the kind of dwarf who whistled while he worked. He was the kind of dwarf who dug deep in the mountain and suffered and hoarded his gold. He wondered what the bum's name had been and why he hadn't asked at the time. Wednesday morning he called Sergeant Lucas in Chicago.

"Philpotts," Lucas said. "His name's Benny Philpotts."

Bobby was astonished that he had shot someone with such a silly name. It was like shooting a child.

"How's he doing?" asked Bobby.

"He's depressed," said Lucas. "Who wouldn't be?"

"Can't he get job training?" asked Bobby. "Or go back to school?"

"Mister," said Lucas, "it's just not that kind of world."

Every time Bobby saw Harriet's hair, he felt a pain in his side. Her black hair was like a sign of mourning for the life they no longer had. And she wasn't friendly to him any more. She was barely civil. She wrote a column on metamorphosis and transfiguration. "Many women feel a need to change their lives. Their homes become their prisons. They feel as if they can't breathe." She bought new clothes, sexier dresses.

When Harriet began her affair with the city editor, she made no secret of it. She told Bobby they had gone to a motel. "I can either move out or you can move out or we can both stay here and get used to it."

He told her he didn't want her to move out and he didn't want to move out himself. There were the children to consider.

"You can fit a bed into your hobbyroom," she told him.

The editor's name was Frank Slovak. He addressed people as "guy" and "bub." He had nicotine stains between his index and middle fingers. He wore a torn London Fog raincoat and a fedora hat. He took Harriet dancing.

Bobby would wait for her to come back at night. He would lie in his narrow bed in the hobbyroom. On the wall were his butterflies. He could see them glitter in the crack of light from the hall. He imagined they were moving their wings and he didn't know what to do about it. He imagined putting more pins into them.

Frank Slovak picked Harriet up at the house in his red Ford Mustang. The first few times Bobby would answer the door. "Hey, guy!" Slovak would say with a big grin.

Bobby stopped answering the door. Sometimes when Slovak showed up, Bobby would be in the backyard tossing a football with Hank who was now eleven. Hank would throw the ball. Bobby would catch it and hug it to his chest. He would run his fingers over the stitching. He would look at how the sky was all gray toward the lake. The doorbell would be ringing. Bobby would think of the water of Lake Michigan and how cold it must be. He thought of being out on the water, of being tossed up and down. He thought of the waves constantly arriving; always new and always the same. He thought of the loneliness out there.

Hank would grow impatient. "You got to throw the ball back, dad," he would call. "You can't just hang onto it." □



Things Seasonal

WALTER SANDERS

1: Summer Play

NOT LONG AGO I NOTICED that vendors' carts have begun to appear along the hallways of upstate New York malls. I had been aware of information and movie ticket booths, and in some malls there have always been free-standing shops where candy or gold chains are for sale. The carts, though, were new to me and could apparently be moved about the mall ways and located temporarily where customer traffic was best.

What caught my eye last week at a local mall was the sand store cart. I do not know whether this is an individual effort or the result of a mini-franchise. I do know that the cart displayed rectangular tin trays filled with colored sand in bright or deep colors ranging from an almost Irish green through black to shocking pink. The trays occupy a shelf which borders the four sides of the cart. A rim keeps the trays and most of the spilled sand from falling to the mall floor. Empty yet still-labeled whiskey bottles and smaller cough medicine or even perfume bottles are the price of admission to as many scoops of sand as it takes to fill the bottle of your choice. Some samples of the possibilities for layering sand in bottles occupy a central elevated section of the vendor's cart. I am not sure that participants follow these examples, for the people I saw creating these fast art rainbows in bottles tended to make their way around the cart trying some of each color available or selecting two or three clashing or strongly contrasting colors for their effort. A cork or wad of paper served as a stopper for the work when finished. Participants bought the bottle; the sand apparently was free. A

Kentucky Gentleman bottle was selling for \$7.95.

I dwell on this recent addition to mall offerings—and it is participatory in a way that most other mall items offered for sale are not—because of the recollections I have had upon seeing these sand stores. I know that we are told that the recession has ended, some time ago at that. And certainly recycling is a necessity these days. I wonder, though, about things coming a second time around. Particularly I wonder about these new commercial sand stores. Perhaps this is the third or fourth time around. It's at least the third.

I recall the second time. It was a time when plants and blooming things were popular and sought after, and when clear plastic pots displayed cacti planted in colored sand, and dish gardens offered surprises to a viewer's eyes not only in the arrangement of the flora and types displayed, but in the colored pebbles that decorated the soil's surface and the layers beneath of different darknesses and stray patterns of soil mixtures and mineral deposits and mold and algae. Whether this fashion had anything to do with Native American interests and practices I do not recall. I saw these wares offered for sale here in the east, and they were probably available in the malls of the time. And although I never bought one of these decorative pieces, I did long for those days of my quiet childhood spent making sand rainbows in discarded bottles beneath a summer's sun. That was the first time.

It was slow work, as I recall, demanding and tedious work for a child but rewarding in that my efforts were sought after, bargained

for, and rewarded in exchange with a desired button or two—the coin of the day.

Somewhere out there in the world was a war, and I knew about it and how the events at Pearl Harbor made themselves felt, gloomily, the day after my birthday. It was then sorrow entered my world. But when school was out in June, I was taken on request to the local sand and gravel company where twenty-five cents worth of clean white sand was measured into the covered metal containers saved for the purpose. Flour came in tin cans with tight-fitting covers; coffee cans were saved throughout the year. All were useful. With my allotment of sand for the summer stored under the back porch steps where it would stay dry and out of sight of potential but probably non-existent sand thieves, and with a reminder that no sand was to be brought into the house, shop was set up.

A small green table borrowed from my sister's days of pretend tea and now stored in the garage served variously as display counter, protection from rain, and work area.

By the end of June the sand store business was thriving in the neighborhood. Several shops were open and colored sand was sold to buyers along with prize rainbows. You bought a rainbow only to learn from it the possibilities for rainbows or to sell it again, not as an original, but for the buttons you wanted more than the rainbow.

Food color disappeared from kitchens and egg dyes carefully saved from Easter reappeared to be combined to form exotic and sometimes disappointing colored sand. My father longed for the day when I would turn to chemistry or baseball

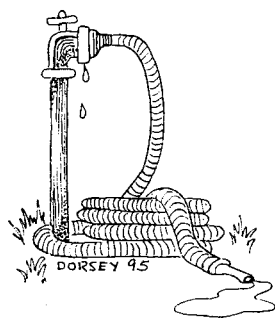
and my mother frowned at stained fingers and occasionally streaked clothing, but she was usually willing to display one offered rainbow stoppered with a bit of rolled up newspaper and to place it for the summer's duration on a high shelf above the sink in the kitchen, where the strong sun as it passed the window in the afternoon opaqued the careful arrangement.

Every morning during the summer vacation, I set up shop in the backyard not far from the back porch. I brought the table out of the garage and placed it openly near the pear tree on the small terrace above my father's Victory garden. Each day I covered the table with several layers of newspaper which I draped over two of its sides and one end to form a paper curtain for the day. I suppose if that had been our interest we could have read news of invasions and the progress of war. Instead, newspapers were neatly spread out under the table to hold small newspaper-wrapped packages of sand, each package containing a different color available that day. Coffee cans filled with standard colors of sand—green, blue, yellow, red—were arranged at one end of the keep. Samples of the special colors were displayed in small amounts on small pieces of newsprint on the counter top along with several rainbows to entice buyers. I stored the prize rainbows under the table, in reserve should a buyer flash a special button as he sampled the above-counter wares. We kept the best hidden and we all knew that.

Prices were determined during the course of a sale. We bartered naturally. A buyer brought along either a pocket or can of buttons or a rainbow or two arranged and captured in a perfume bottle or medicine bottle or small jar of some kind. Rainbows might be exchanged even—Steven, or two for one, or a scoop of dark blue sand—a color sought after as much as dark red—could be bought for as many buttons as the transaction could

stand. Usually no buyer or seller went away from an exchange feeling that they had gained more than they had given.

It was not the amount of sand, but the colors and design that determined the price for a rainbow—as well as whether or not it was even for sale. You usually kept one through the winter as a reminder of next summer's promise. Some beginners in their early enthusiasm, like today's mall rainbow makers, would pour three or four colors of sand through a borrowed funnel into a bottle and stopper it with newspaper and call it a rainbow. They soon learned the error in their practice of the trade. Surprise was essential and desire was requisite. With experience we all learned to try to outdo the other in refinement of design, the subtlety of arrangement of rainbows. An expert would pour a small amount of a nearly neutral color, sometimes even the white sand itself, into the bottle, after which he would gently shake



the bottle or tap it lightly with a palm to distribute the sand, perhaps with a little rise to one side of the bottle. Then the next color, in a small amount, was slowly poured in with the bottle perhaps tilted, so that almost each grain of sand fell where it was directed. We were in our small way as careful as a painter doing fine detail work. The layers were built up sometimes with strong contrasts of color, some shading ever so slightly so as to appear initially all one color until upon close inspection, which is what we all invited so long as no one shook a rainbow, the pattern showed. During one summer it became fashionable—who discovered it I don't know—to insert a fine wire slowly into the finished rainbow down along the inside of the bottle two or more times to make graph marks at different levels and in different colors of the sand, for an even more pleasing and surprising effect than the simple layers yielded. For a while that was all you would see at

any of the stores. Everyone was creating earthquakes in their rainbows.

Once, though, I worked most of a day on a precision rainbow. Exactly the same amount of each color of sand was layered evenly in a round bottle with never a hill nor a valley to be detected as you revolved the finished work before your eyes. And when you did you saw eighth-inch layers of every color of sand you could ever imagine right there, with no color repeated even once. No one had ever seen such a fine rainbow, no one tried to duplicate the effort, and it was some time before I let anyone else hold it up to their eyes for a closer look.

I sometimes wonder what I gained from my summers as a businessman other than a splendid collection of buttons which were stored away for some years in the attic, along with my marbles and a broken Louisville Slugger and a dried out baseball glove. Whatever it was, I do know that today when I walk through a mall and pass the sand store on the vendor's cart I feel myself sorting through the coins in my pocket for a stray button. For a moment I am tempted. Of course I know that any effort of mine spent in the midst of mall way traffic could not please or surprise as any earlier effort had.

2. Cold Weather

FEBRUARY 14, Valentine's Day, brought to the northern tier of Pennsylvania the first full day of sunshine in more than five weeks. The below-zero temperatures of January and most of the first two weeks of February gave way, all at once, to a week of clear skies and rising temperatures. It never really became warm during that week except that the days seemed to linger and the sun warmed up the car faster than the heater did. Walking the dog became, for that week, a slightly more leisurely activity, for there was not the rush to bring Blake and the new cat, Eliot (who insists on accompanying us on our after-supper walk—just to keep the dog and me company, I like to think) inside quickly in order to dry

the dog and clean the ice balls from his webbed toes. The sun and the almost dry roadway made for a pleasant change of pace, some relief from what was becoming the daily drudgery of dressing for protection from the cold weather that has set records for the year. Our cross-country skier friends have had an abundance of snow, but I have neither seen nor heard of many of them actually out skiing. Martha, who got new knickers for the sport early last fall, explained that even with all the snow, it just wasn't right.

The sun that day, and the warmer air, could make a person careless of the weather. The dangerous wind chills of the previous weekend gave way to thoughts of outdoor activities. We momentarily thought about washing windows on the outside, perhaps to get a clearer view of the next day's sunrise. Of course there was still snow on the ground, also in record amounts, and icicles reminded us that the temperature was still below freezing. But a day of sunshine, which was to be followed by another and still another, does lift the spirit, and it seemed appropriate that nature saw fit to greet that day of romantic thoughts with clear skies and the hope of a succession of better days, just as love does.

A whole day of sunshine brightness can cause delusions. Even though I knew that the sun had risen just the day before at 6:56 and had set at 5:33, and that on this day devoted to romance and all the promises of love, the sun had risen one minute earlier and would set one minute later, a gain of two minutes of light, the fact that the sky was clear and the sun was warm that day allowed me to entertain the pleasant thought that somehow we had gained, all at once, in one day, the longer day we would soon know by the month's end.

It was while I entertained that thought, as I walked Blake early that morning and listened to the birds, that I noticed the chickadees and their serenade to the dawn—and to me, I thought, for I was sure that they called out in their birdsong that morning, “Hey, Swee-tie. Hi, Swee-tie.” □

RICHARD JACKSON

The Poem That Was Once Called “Desperate” But Is Now Striving to Become the Perfect Love Poem

So then the sunken heart was hauled up, nearly breaking the nets, and just at that moment, back ashore, while the scandalous flowers were opening to the sun, while Agamemnon had finished sending his messages of condolence to his wife, the somber moon began to exert unusual control over this sentence, and I thought, wait a minute, what if this poem worked and she began to love me? What if I could invent a new word the way Catullus invented a word for kiss? And would I have time to change those stars that have been embalmed in the eyes of Agamemnon to something like— well, — but I know I *could* think of something the way Clytemnestra's sentries imagined every sunrise or glint of steel to be the long awaited signal fire. Sentries, secret messages, royal scandals, who am I kidding? When am I going to stop living off the debris of lost loves?

But if it was to work, the poem, shouldn't I stop wasting time and talk about something more important in order to make her love me? There's the Clytemnestra syndrome to think about here that is, the question of who lies best to whom. And take Catullus, —in one of his poems to Lesbia, he talks about Troy and Herakles just to let her know how cultured he is— yes, the mind, despite what we think, it's *that* important—and then he mentions his brother who died in Turkey, and he really did mourn a lifetime for him, but the point is, he lets Lesbia feel his remorse too, then sympathy, then, —well, good sex, that was Catullus' aim all along, wasn't it? And so with this poem, surely there's time to add something about my knowledge of the Trojan war, the complexities concerning Agamemnon's murder of his daughter and how I agree that, no matter how much the gods

commanded him, he should have turned around and set sail for home and his anxious wife, all the while emphasizing my essential sympathy with Clytemnestra's plan to cut the bastard up like tonight's roast pork.

Maybe I should just go back to that little ship in the cove, hauling up not a heart this time, but a statue, yes, and an important find, good enough for a famous museum, — but, well maybe not, museums mean the past, death, lost civilizations, lost love, so maybe a treasure,— okay, ancient Greek coins because this poem is set off some Greek isle,— Agamemnon, remember— but wait, the trouble with dragging in Agamemnon is that Aeschylus who wrote the play died on just such a shore when an eagle dropped a shell on his head— so maybe it's Sappho's island—this sticks better to my subtext— where the poetess mourned for her lost love, and where—

But Sappho, you ask? Okay, true enough, but remember Catullus also filled his poems with confusions of gender to suggest the largesse of his sensitive and empathetic vision to even the most difficult of lovers. Me too. And why should I keep my hormones padlocked in a single shed? Look what happened to Clytemnestra waiting a decade for the one thing that drove her mad. And why does everyone have to keep frisking the heart for secret weapons? Why should I have to live like there's an asterisk next to my love? Maybe the desperate past is ready to weigh anchor, maybe my ideas are so plentiful they'll just spill from the holes in my pockets like ancient coins, and there she'll be, on that shore as the boat sails off, happy like me, dressed like a Greek goddess, and she's ready to spend a little time in my story, this story, with you and me, where love is smuggled on board in containers marked history, responsibility, prophecy, all those things Desire's watchman never sees, decorum, reason, reality, and all the other contraptions we use to try to avoid them.



Mary

LAWRENCE STURHAHN

IT'S COLD IN FLAGSTAFF, Arizona, in early January, very cold. There'd been a driving blizzard the night before so there's a couple of feet of new snow on the ground when my friend, Jim, takes me to a small restaurant near the university to have lunch. It's the kind of place that serves thick bean and vegetable soup and fat sandwiches made from multigrain breads packed with sprouts and avocado slices and exotic cheese. At the table behind us is a very pretty lady with prematurely gray hair, eating alone and reading a book on alternative medicine. Someone in me says I should say something to her, so I do. Her name's Mary Poore, she says, and she's a naturopathic physician.

Who grew up in Montana, fourth generation; her family's been there a long time. Her father, a retired attorney—one of three brothers—her mother didn't work, a family of same-sex offspring, it seems. Mary's the youngest of four sisters, and she has three daughters herself: Lilly (5), Emily (7), and Cara (9). She works two days a week; the other three days she's with her children.

WHEN I APPROACHED her in the restaurant, I'd been in Flagstaff for two days, having gone there to meet a friend from Washington state whose lady of the time went to the University of Northern Arizona. Knowing he was going to visit her, I had adjusted my journey to go to Flagstaff to see him. In the two days—in addition to the snow, the likes of which I hadn't seen in many years—I picked up strong emanations in the community.

Flagstaff seemed to be kind of an alternative town, different from tra-

ditional small American cities—or at that point in time on my journey, *seemingly* different. A lot of sort of the old counter-culture attributes, I thought. Art openings. Concerts. Readings. Things like that going on. Funky interesting shops to look in the windows of. One of those combination magazine-newspaper-tobacco-paperback book places that stocked everything and allowed browsing. Interesting-looking people on the streets, too, with beards and long hair, dressed in combinations of winter gear—skiing, backpacking and army surplus—and slogging through the snow.

It seemed absolutely synchronistic that I'd meet a naturopathic woman physician that day. When I told her about Cody's Tales and asked if she'd do an interview, she said the problem was going to be getting it into her schedule, but she guessed she could. She had a lovely, gentle smile.

So, two days later, when what had been fresh white pristine soft stuff had turned to dirty slush and ice, and the chains on automobile tires made sounds like broken lawn mowers moving on the wet streets, we met in her office. Her youngest daughter, Lilli, was with her. Part of the time sitting on her lap.

Mary said she went to school in Missoula, the University of Montana, got her degree in pharmacy. After that she worked as a hospital pharmacist for four years. "Gradually, over that time," she said, "I became disillusioned with that type of medicine. I got this question in my head: How had people healed and recovered from illness before the advent of the drug revolution in the nineteen-forties?"

"Listen," I said, "I just heard on NPR this morning that they've

come up with a drug for alcoholism."

"I heard that, too," she said.

"It's being marketed by one of the giants in the industry—I forget which—but they'll make millions!"

"Right," she said. "And they quoted about how many alcoholics there are, so I'm sure they're excited about that."

"Right."

"Well, anyway," she said, "for me, back then, what I came up with, not only from my reading, but from trying on my own to make sense of life and health, was that probably everything we need to stay healthy and recover from illness was supplied for us in our environment. That really made sense to me.

"I started reading about herbs, got interested in diet and how it affects health, and there happened to be a naturopathic doctor only about thirty miles from Missoula. So I went to see him, worked with him on my own health, found out from him where the schools were—the best schools. At the time there were only two. I stopped doing pharmacy and went to Portland, Oregon and enrolled in the naturopathic school there which is a four-year program."

While she was in Portland Mary also attended Oregon College of Oriental Medicine, learned acupuncture and Chinese herbs. In the beginning she didn't do much homeopathy, but she's done a number of post-graduate professional courses since. She does more homeopathy now.

At school Mary met Mark—her husband-to-be—who was also a student. They got married and started having children, and after graduating moved to Arizona. At that time there were seven states that licensed naturopaths, of which

Arizona was one. Nine years ago it was, they set up their practice in Flagstaff.

"Basically," she said, "what I do is Chinese medicine and homeopathy and naturopathic medicine, which involves Western herbs and diet and hydrotherapy and lifestyle and those sorts of things."

IN THE CATCH-ALL of systems that Alternative (or *Complementary*) medicine has become in our time, naturopathy started off being a kind of catch-all itself. Arising from various 17th and 18th century healing systems—its roots really go back to Hippocrates, the first doctor, in classical Greece circa 400 B.C.—it's ironic that allopathic medicine (often naturopathic medicine's divergent critic and sometime vehement foe) also starts with some of the same ideas.

The Hippocratic school assumed that everything in nature had a rational basis. Disease was a result of something wrong in nature's balance: in the food, water, air. But paradoxically it was also in the power of these natural phenomena to heal. *Vis medicatrix naturae*: the healing power of nature—it's both a way of life and a concept of healing. And maybe most important in all was the idea that the body could heal itself.

In the U.S. in the 1800s the healing process—which had European sources as well—involved a combination of hygienics and hydrotherapy. The name *naturopathy* is attributed to either Dr. John Scheel (1895) in New York or Benedict Lust (1902). What's important about all this is its eclecticism: nutrition therapy, natural diet, herbal medicine, homeopathy, osteopathy, exercise therapy, hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, stress reduction. In our time the complementary medicine field is a pantheon of all of the above, plus kinesiology, acupuncture, hypnosis, massage therapy (of many different kinds)—all part of the fold. Among the cognoscenti today, of course, it's no longer just the body that's involved, it's the bodymind.

And always to remember the most important dicta: the high level of involvement of the patient in the healing process. A living human is more than just the sum of his/her mechanical parts; we're not just machines (intricate as they may be). It is all of mind and body, and the sum is composed of particles existent in what appears to be mostly void—but each having innate intelligence and a desire to be whole (which means free of disease). Symptoms, then, are positive signs of this innate desire for wholeness, and the role of healer is that of an aid or facilitator, not a god who dispenses drugs to suppress the symptoms, or wields a knife to cut out what is rotten.

Vis medicatrix naturae.

LILLY IS SITTING on Mary's lap and suddenly she interrupts, wanting to know if I have a dog.

The intuition of kids, I thought. "Absolutely," I say, "a great dog, named Cody." Lilly smiles.

"And you said hydrotherapy," I say, "that's one I don't know. What is it?"

"Oh— Hydrotherapy actually came from Europe but it's changed over the years. Basically what I was taught is more traditional, and that's using hot and cold packs to stimulate circulation in the abdomen. You do it on the back, and you can do it for acute things. For example, with a fever you put cool well-wrung-out wet socks on your feet and cover them with wool—that tends to pull the energy out of your head down to your feet. Like you have a headache or an earache, it tends to lessen that. We use hot and cold a lot, you know, with injuries—to pull blood to the injury, or push it away."

I ASKED MARY ABOUT the feelings for Flagstaff I'd had, and she said, "Yeah, I think it's like that."

"Why—?"

"Why here in Northern Arizona, you mean? Well, the university, of course, but then a lot of towns have universities. Still—having a lot of young people makes for open mindedness—sometimes, with some young people, that is. Also I think

that the Indian cultural influence makes a difference—the Hopi and the Navajo. The reservation's just east of here. And there's actually a fair number of people who come to Arizona to work with the Indians, to help them in some way, and they end up staying in the community. What else? Well, Sedona—you've heard of Sedona? It's just south of here and supposedly located on a vortex. What else, well, I don't know...exactly. Maybe— Compared to a lot of other Arizona cities, because the winters are so cold, we don't get retirees here—who might tend to make the community a little conservative. And maybe it's small enough too so that there is some sort of unity and control. I mean, there's not a whole lot of crime up here. And another thing is, people who come here tend not to choose this location to make a lot of money, but because they think it's pretty, or they like to do outdoors-y things. So maybe all those things combined make for a little more open mindedness."

For acceptance, I thought, less fear. . . it's the fear that stifles people, blocks them off.

"So how do you—given your New-Age purview (and that's not the best term for what is definitely happening in the culture, and hopefully what will continue to happen)—so with your New Agenesis, and naturopathy, what do you find your experience to be in Flagstaff? Does it have anything to do with the way of this city, as opposed to something traditional?"

"My experience has been very good in Flagstaff. When we first arrived it took a while for people to understand what we did... I'd say on the continuum that some people might think what I do is a little far out. But, in general, most people feel that it makes sense. And it's not necessarily that esoteric or that far out. Interestingly enough, the medicines that I use are really not necessarily new medicines, but based on medicine that's been used for over two thousand years. Like Chinese herbs, for instance..."

"And homeopathy, I think that probably came about in the eigh-

teen-sixties—that German doctor, Hahnemann—so that’s over a hundred years old, and naturopathy is over a hundred years old. Many of my patients tend to think of my medicine as more common sense, I think.”

“Well, it’s growing in popularity here—in this country,” I said, “even against the bastions of the AMA allopaths.”

“It’s taken some time to build a practice, but we’re plenty busy now, and I actually work—because it’s to my advantage to be able to work—with the traditional medical doctors in the community. Not that all the medical doctors would be willing to work with me. But, in general, I think they realize that we’re cautious. We refer when its outside of an area that we can handle safely, and we try to back up our diagnosis—I mean we do bloodwork, we do Paps, we do mammograms...”

“So you sort of touch on the allopathic—?”

“Right. We use their systems of diagnosis. We don’t necessarily use their therapies, but we use their diagnosis. And I think— In my mind, I see what we do as being more grounded, more common-sense, and of course the other aspect is that the body does much better when it uses substances that have been around for millions of years—like herbs. We have systems in our body that can deal with those herbs better than it can with drugs.

“And, anyway,” she went on, “the philosophy of naturopathic medicine is that the body has an innate ability to bring itself back into harmony and to heal. So by trying to use therapies that stimulate the body’s own healing powers, that’s going to get you to a better place.”

I said, “There’s a lot of people out there saying things like that these days—Andrew Weil, Bernie Siegel, Chopra— Do you know Chopra’s work?”

“Yeah, I’m familiar with him. Anyway, my experience in Flagstaff has been great. Occasionally, I hear someone saying ‘Well you can go see her, but it’s not going to help,’ or ‘you better be careful with those

herbal things.’ But, in general, we actually get referrals...pediatricians who can’t— Ear infections that go on and on and on and the patients are on prophylactic antibiotics. I’ve had an internist who’s referred patients to us for dietary counseling, and of course I’m able to do whatever I want with that. But, anyway, I feel like maybe, because in some ways we’re in the middle or on the end of the spectrum as far as alternative therapies, that it’s more acceptable for people who tend to be a little more conventional-medicine oriented. We don’t...I don’t condemn using other therapies. I don’t use and I’m not familiar with using crystals. Mark and I have colleagues who use kinesiology, but we don’t use kinesiology—we’re not trained in that. So we just use the basics.”

“So, your patients, do they— This new consciousness philosophy that we’re talking about is *radical* in our culture today, and that’s who you are. So, your patients—do they pick up on that radical attitude, or that idea? Do they think that they’re going into something new?”

“I think it really varies,” Mary said. “Some patients come to me because they haven’t really gotten anywhere with allopathic medicine, or they’ve gotten worse, and its gotten frightening for them. And so, they’re sort of in the ‘Well, maybe I’ll try that’ bag. ‘What else is there to do?’ Some patients are more along the lines of alternative lifestyle from the very beginning—dietwise. What they’re interested in, their beliefs sort of go along with natural substances and not putting toxic things into your body. And



this just complements their lifestyle. But I see doctor's wives, I see nurses, I see people who in their lives are fairly into the conventional medicine system, and use this as a complement, and maybe they still stay on birth-control pills, or they still smoke cigarettes, but they still find that they like using natural medicine in their lives. And then there's people, especially older people, who say 'Well, this is what my mother and my grandmother always used, and it worked, and I don't feel comfortable with drugs.'"

"Well, there is a statistic that indicates that a great many more people are beginning to use these methods than have in the past. And of course it's much more accepted in Europe, more used in Europe than it is here. But there are a lot of closet naturopaths who are sneaking off to see their homeopaths instead of going to the emergency room." (She smiled) "So, do you find that the acceptance of your work is more from women? Or men? Or do you find a difference?"

"Yeah. Well, I think that in general women statistically see doctors more than men do. I think because I'm a woman, I see more women. And I think, in general, maybe women tend to be more open to this sort of thing."

"That's sure true. Men have a big problem, there's no question that we've got a big problem. The way we're raised, and then the culture we live in does not give us much of a chance to be anything more than macho, and if you're not that, you're in deep trouble. What about you and Mark, are you involved in any kinds of social activities?"

"With the Unitarian Church. And what other things? Well, I'm involved with a woman's group to discuss women's issues, but actually more just to talk about our personal struggles, to have someone to bounce it off of—a sort of a co-counseling thing. Actually, at this time in my life, I feel fairly overwhelmed as far as time—to stay on top of my practice and keep things together at home...to raise three daughters. No, I like working with people. I guess since mainly I work

PHOTOCOPY - CUT - STAPLE, LEFT	
how and why.	① (continued)
we understand how and why.	② (continued)
it's only at the end that we understand how and why.	③ (continued)
If ever, it's only at the end that we understand how and why.	④
A Sentence for Bob Brown's <i>Readies</i> Machine... by M. Kasper	

with women and children, I like that."

"Is it comfortable for you working in the same profession as your husband?"

"Yeah, we don't work the same days, 'cause he's home with the children when I'm here. But we bounce things off of each other. Sometimes, because it's a business too, there are certain stresses as far as how we're going to do things. But in general that hasn't been a problem. I often wondered what it would be like to have input, something to talk about with somebody who did something

totally different. But, this has actually worked out well."

"And culturally, do you go to theater, or movies?"

"Yeah, we can't do too much with the children, but we like to go out—they have a center for the arts and we try to do that once in a while. And we like to go to movies. And I read books, mainly medicine books, homeopathic journals, alternative medicine journals."

"And you're happy with what you do?"

"Oh— Yes! Very happy with what I do." □

Eastern Regionals

ROBERT L. KING

HORTON FOOTE'S *The Young Man from Atlanta* had its premiere off Broadway last year, won the Pulitzer Prize, moved to Boston's Huntington Theatre where I saw it and then went to the Alley Theatre in Houston. In anticipation of a Broadway run this spring, the director, Peter Masterson, was dismissed, an action comparable to firing the coach of a weak team. The director may have introduced pauses to underscore some of Foote's melodramatic connections, but the clunking revelations and reversals are the author's alone. At the start, sixty-four-old Will Kidder is joined by his business protégé, Tom Jackson. Despite Tom's being a "close friend" according to the text's description, Will launches into a series of set speeches, filled with information that such a friend would already know: the cost of Will's new house, his heart condition, his only son's life story, his new house guest and that man's family background. And more. It seems to become too much for Foote himself; he almost apologizes for the exposition overload by having Will say, "I don't know why I'm telling you all this." For one reason, the audience is being set up for a *Death-of-a-Salesman* premise; before the first scene is over and with all his other problems mounting, Will is fired by the son of the man who founded the company that Will served for its thirty-eight years. After the skimpiest of preliminaries on his part and more personal history from Will, Ted Cleveland Jr. bluntly gives us all the bad news: "I'm going to have to replace you, Will. You'll have three months notice beginning today." A couple of minutes later, Will says that he might now start his own company,

and Ted's question, "Do you have enough capital to get going?," alerts the now savvy audience to a complication not far down the dramatic road. Before the scene ends, Foote brings Tom back on stage—we needn't guess who will replace Will.

Will's capital would have to come from the money he has given his wife, Lily Dale, over fifteen Christmases, some seventy-five thousand dollars. Shortly before he asks her for a loan of that money, she has told her step-father, Pete, the house guest, that she has given thousands of dollars to the title character whose hard luck stories—mother needing an operation, sister deserted and left with small children—are dutifully summarized by the gullible Lily Dale. She is thirty-five thousand dollars short of the amount Will needs and, wondrous to contemplate, that's exactly what Pete has managed to save. But, once again, shortly before Will asks Pete for a loan, Lily Dale does. At about this point in the play, the Boston audience felt so put upon that many began laughing at the play's predictability, including Will's offstage heart attack at scene's end. The loudest unwelcome laugh came two scenes later when Will asks Pete "for that thirty-thousand dollars" shortly after Pete has told Lily Dale that he has offered some of the money to his great-nephew whose sister needs an operation.

The play sets up Lily Dale's behavior with the off-stage title character in much the same way. Will wants her to have nothing to do with him; she sees him on the sly. Pete's great-nephew exposes him as a hustler; she refuses to believe him, much as she will not admit that

her son committed suicide because of his relationship with the young man from Atlanta. Will himself will not meet with that young man because ignorance is more comforting than discovering whatever motivated his son. The final stage image, "*Will holds Lily Dale as the lights fade*," offers unearned promise for the troubled couple. Throughout, Foote asks us to accept quick reversals and anguished speeches as dramatic realization of moral urgency. His characters are types without the depth that makes choice credible or difficult. Neither the director nor the cast have much to work with.

GOD'S HEART, BY CRAIG Lucas, had its world premiere at the Trinity Rep in Providence last spring; its use of multimedia techniques created a visually busy surface beneath which Lucas made moral comments

on our society far more telling than any point raised by Horton Foote's more traditional approach. The staging supports the play's subtle argument that our social connections are electronic rather

than human. Dramatic images that are merely trendy in other plays—multiple monitors, flashing lights, sharp juxtapositions of opposites—function in *God's Heart* as vehicles for valid insights. More than a simple framing device, the dream at the core of the play offers a vision, part joke, part hallucination, part nightmare. In the first scene, Janet is nursing her baby as she looks down from the privileged vantage point of her apartment. She sees a young black man, Carlin, in the public park opposite; her doctor husband, Ed, amused by her



patronizing attitude toward Carlin, accuses her of phony liberalism. She should, he kids her, get the guilt part of her brain lobotomized. Besides, she's showing her breasts to everyone in the park. Janet responds that they—people like Carlin—can't see her, and Ed makes a telling joke: if she can see down, "they" can see up. Social distinction is based on physical distance, not essential difference. In the last scene, Janet agrees with Ed to move to the suburbs, and the distance between social classes is literally extended.

Besides the secure white family, *God's Heart* presents Carlin, his girl friend and a lesbian couple. Such pairs might brush against one another in our society; they can connect in the dream vision of the play but mostly in our communal place of worship—the media. Early in the play, Carlin casually flops on Janet and Ed's bed to watch TV. Both props are realistic, and no partition inhibits Carlin's stage movement from his world to theirs. Although he does not belong in their apartment, he has a place, as all of us do, in front of a TV. Realistic railroad tracks protrude stage right behind the bed; the train carries Barbara and her companion, Eleanor, who is dying of cancer. The two have arrived for a ceremony honoring Eleanor for resisting a beating from gay bashers. Carlin, a bright student frustrated in his persistent job search, has gone to work for a drug dealer and has his first automatic weapon. He bumps into Eleanor when she gets off the train, but since he recognizes her from television news, she can't be his first hold-up victim, and the scene ends in mutual laughter when they all realize how inept he is with the gun. Other contacts possible only in a dream world occur in the penultimate scene set outside a crack house; drugs provide a common social denominator as Carlin, his mother, Barbara and Janet free base.

Janet's mother is the right-wing host of a talk show; the two have a heated exchange over current topics but Janet, like so many of us, is talking back to a television set. When

Carlin's infant daughter undergoes surgery, we see soap opera images and dialogue on monitors, Lucas's apt rendition of society's response to human misery. In another scene, Janet is all fussiness and cant as she visits a hospitalized shooting victim; her self-indulgent show of concern cannot possibly change things. When the victim's image is shown on the talk show, we hear the audience's canned reaction of horror; in only a moment, they coo and gush over pictures of a Guatemalan child. These relatively brief scenes culminate in an overlong one, the resurrection of Eleanor as a computer program. A Doctor Farkas, also part of the TV show, helps Barbara enter over thirty-thousand questions and answers in a program that bestows electronic immortality on Eleanor. Her image, five times larger than life, speaks from a large screen over the stage, but when Barbara kisses her puckered lips on a monitor, Eleanor fizzles first to black and then to static. Through this reduction Lucas sharply satirizes the bogus transcendence forced through stage mechanics by many of his contemporaries. *God's Heart* drags sometimes, notably as the data base for Eleanor is created, but finally its dramatic insights about our global non-village more than justify the dream premise.

ATHOL FUGARD GETS four credits in the program for his new play, *Valley Song*: he wrote it, directed it and played two of the three parts. He received entrance applause at its American premiere in Princeton's McCarter Theatre, a tribute to his life as well as to his art. The play, despite Fugard's personal involvement and commitment, ultimately submerges the author's self in an allegory, one in which he passes the creative torch to the first generation to mature after the formal end of apartheid in South Africa. Fugard plays "The Author, a White man" and Abraam Jonkers (or Buks) "an old Coloured tenant farmer"; both men have deep attachments to the land and both see it as fecund, literally so to the farmer and metaphorically to the creative writer. In the

latter role, Fugard provoked appreciative chuckles when he said that he left "the real world of the Karoo" where there is no "nonsense" for the "make believe world of the theatre." Throughout his career, Fugard has worked the resources of that make believe to question and undermine the appearances of civility that authorize discrimination. In his collaborations with John Kani and Winston Ntshona (*Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*), in *The Blood Knot* and in *Master Harold*, Fugard displays, through theatrical convention, costume and role-playing, the socially acquired nature of racism, its conventional behavior. Whites learn how to dominate; blacks to accommodate, sometimes preserving a measure of dignity with irony. In *Valley Song*, however, digging, saluting, dancing and other actions are performed more to illustrate the acts themselves than to invite questions about their deeper significance. Similarly, speeches of simple exposition are delivered straight out to the audience. On a basic level of creativity, Fugard forsakes subtlety for clarity while on a higher level, he suggests a poignant, personal truth—that with a new day dawning for South African blacks, his day may be coming to an end.

With the house lights up, Fugard entered carrying pumpkin seeds; he mimed the digging and planting of Buks, the tenant farmer and his alter ego. As Buks, he spoke of hearing the valley sing in its springtime promise of new life. His granddaughter's singing is also a valley song; her voice fills the theater several times in the play. She, Veronica, wants to leave the valley to become a singer in Johannesburg; she does not want the job that Buks would have her take, doing housework for the White Author. She hopes for a better future after apartheid: "Isn't it supposed to be different now?" So far, though, everything is "just the same," and the young woman's talent is frustrated: "I am also a living thing, you know. I also want to grow." As this kind of clarity is delivered, it completely occupies our attention, while on reflection such lines can be

heard in a larger context which deepens their meaning. Fugard himself had blacks technically listed as his house workers so that they could write, act and “grow.” As White Author, Fugard would “own a piece of the Karoo” even though the tenant farmer has worked that land with his hands and can probably make a stronger moral claim to it. One has title from “a piece of paper”; the other has the legacy from a father who structured his life on land, house and Church. At the end, the white man invites Buks to plant pumpkin seeds with him; to him, the Karoo’s creative potential is sensual and immediate—it smells and feels better than a woman. Now, after apartheid, the two older men are joined by a common enterprise for the first time and can find fulfillment in the Karoo. Veronica, reminiscent of the young Fugard, is being pulled away from it so that she can flourish artistically: “I’ll die if I have to live my whole life here.” In an echo of *The Master Builder*, the young woman’s enthusiasm prompts the old artist to say that he once had a dream of his own.

At one point, Buks can’t quite sing an aria he learned while guarding an Italian prisoner of war; at others, he has no problem with hymns learned in Church. In contrast, LisaGay Hamilton sings Veronica’s new songs with an exuberance and sincerity that refute the heritage of an imposed culture. It’s time, *Valley Song* argues, for the white male, surely Fugard himself, to step aside, to let the black woman sing her song to the world. That song will be all the more winning for being born in native soil.

ROBERT ALEXANDER’s *I ain’t yo’ uncle: The New Jack Revisionist Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, first performed in 1990, brings Harriet Beecher Stowe on stage to be “interrogated” for her famous novel’s slave narrative. Last year’s revival at the Hartford Stage Company added a fresh anachro-

nism to the multitude of them in the original: “I’m gonna join the L.A.P.D.,” Simon Legree says in his exit line, “I hear they’re looking for a few good men.” Memories of the Simpson trial raise a laugh when Topsy is told “You’re in Virginia now; we don’t use the *n* word here.” The reactions to current references accentuate the problems attending the running allusion to Stowe’s novel: few people know it well and, relative to present issues, fewer still care much about it except as a museum piece. Alexander’s premise is fragile and the jokes derived from it wear thin quickly.

Uncle Tom—our abiding stereotype, derived from Stowe but not created by her—enters through the house after the strains of “Sweet Georgia Brown,” the Globetrotters’ warm-up tune, fade. All shine, shuffle and smiles, he greets members of the audience and reassures them: “I’m the one you came to see.” As her black characters assemble around her, though, Stowe asks, “What is it you people want?” The revision is their answer. Its new scenes, including Mrs. St. Clair’s attempt to seduce Tom and a hilariously stylized death by Little Eva, persuade her that the blacks have improved on her story, and she raises her fist in the Black Power salute.

Topsy, boom box blaring, comes through the audience at the play’s end. Sprinkling her assault with

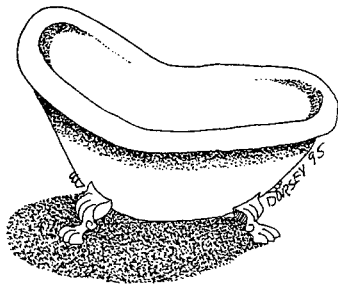
obscurities, she almost literally gets in people’s faces, staring belligerently as she goes to the edge of the thrust playing space and from the distance of a few feet issues her challenges: “You won’t sit next to me

on the bus. . . . I see you grab your purse. . . . Who are you looking at? . . . Do you want to leave?” People did, as Alexander no doubt intended, feel uncomfortable as the distance between them and the literary artifact shrank. Michele Morgan, who played Topsy with fearsome credibility, smiled with special warmth during the curtain calls, ironically re-establishing good will

toward the audience—one man in particular, whom she had antagonized only moments before. It was all in fun; we can come together. For all its intimidating effectiveness, Topsy’s verbal assault badgered the audience without questioning, much less correcting, any of its attitudes. Its applause confirmed the status quo, with every trouble, like Stowe’s text, at a safe distance.

LATE LAST YEAR the Long Wharf Theatre presented an issue-oriented treatment of racism in its world premiere production of Peter Sagal’s *Denial*. Bernard Cooper, a professor of engineering, is seeking legal help because the government has seized his records and refuses to release them. Cooper’s Milquetoast manner belies his inner viciousness; he exchanges pleasantries with a black secretary in the waiting room of Abigail Gersten, a Jewish lawyer who agrees to represent him. The seized records include Cooper’s mailing lists and boxes of materials for those like him who deny that the Holocaust occurred. Always sounding amiable, Cooper says, “I don’t deny the Holocaust—you can only deny a proven fact.” His preferred term is “the extermination story,” and his publication has a sanitized title, *The Journal of Independent Inquiry*. *Denial* stages confrontations over ideas, conflicts that Sagal could see all around us. The ACLU has defended the right of self-proclaimed Nazis to parade in Skokie, Illinois, and Cooper’s most outrageous claims have all been made before, many of them in full-page newspaper ads.

Abby Gersten, to be sure, finds her potential client despicable; “if” she takes the case, she won’t speak for him: “My client will be the first amendment.” On the day she first meets Cooper, she has a later appointment with Adam Ryberg, representing the government and wearing a yarmulke. “I don’t,” he tells her, “understand how you can even consider defending that man.” She sees two issues in the case, freedom of speech and illegal seizure. In brief alternating scenes, we see her anguish and Cooper’s



standard presentation, complete with visual aids. He lectures the theater audience in a style with enough academic flavor to seem dispassionate; he drops the names of honored, principled intellectuals—Socrates, Galileo, Thomas More—and he takes questions from his imagined listeners. He seems to welcome open exchange while she argues the moral question with fellow Jews in her office. She is told that her decision is “not about practicing law but about doing what’s right.” Her secretary, who was considering the law as a career until she sees this case evolve, also questions Gersten’s decision and is promptly put in her place: “Since when have secretaries become the arbiters of right and wrong?” With such lines, Sagal gives Gersten a few warts; he wants to complicate his own presentation, to make it other than a debate between the conscientious Jew and her immoral foe. In another move, he would keep the question of Holocaust denial open; if Cooper is refuted and silenced, *Denial* would suggest that such people pose no great threat to historical memory and truth.

Cooper debates Gersten in her office as a dramatic preliminary to a confrontation with his most formidable opponent, Noah Gomrowitz, a camp survivor and published authority on the Holocaust. Gersten brings the men together under the cover of legal protocol: “This is what is known as a discovery.” Cooper asserts that only 500,000 died, that they were not killed intentionally, that the “terrible smell” at Auschwitz came from a rubber factory, and that so-called witnesses are “not reliable sources.” In a brazen appropriation of moral diction, Cooper refers to the scholar-survivor’s “great crimes against humanity.” He goes even further, saying that what allegedly happened will be unrecorded and unremembered. Gomrowitz’s response is the human, emotional one; he attacks him as the scene ends.

Another character, Nathan, is introduced after intermission; his role provides some comic relief and

C. DALE YOUNG

Blue Springs

As if the sky during its emergence
—when it bubbled its way up out of the sand,
cooled and then sublimed into vapor
that blued the dank grey of the atmosphere—
left a residue of cobalt behind to remind

from where it had sprung into existence,
the water rising from this spring
appears unearthly, as only things
close to earth, born of earth, can:
its blue deeper than the heart of a sapphire.

Today, when faced with such a spectacle,
we have, as usual, only two choices:
the paralysis of awe, or the quick nonchalance
of acceptance. But what about the Spaniards
who came upon this spring before there was

a platform lined with inner tubes, before
there were wooden walkways elevated to slow
their impending rot, before there was a faux beach,
its sand stolen from the spring’s center?
Did they run in with their clothes on

convinced this was *the* fountain of youth?
Did they laugh believing themselves
drunk, mad, asleep—dead, maybe?
That afternoon, late summer, we did not swim,
chose instead to wander out to the edge

of the walkway, not a word between the two of us,
only the wind. Unlike us mere mortals, the trees
had long since been impressed,
preferring, instead, to maintain postures
incompatible with the work of sycophants.

allows Sagal to conclude *Denial* inconclusively—but at very high price. All along, Cooper has had a tape recording of Nathan's death-camp story. Nathan bears Gomrowitz no ill will and told his tale innocently, but it is devastating. The esteemed Gomrowitz hit Nathan in the camp to keep him from a roll call; he took his place to save himself. This act of cowardice would give the lie to the Gomrowitz legend and also destroy the authority of his books, testimonies against the deniers. Gersten, stunned by this disclosure, finds a way to keep it quiet. She cuts a deal with Ryberg and Gomrowitz; the government will return Cooper's materials, drop all charges against him, and Nathan's story will be forever suppressed. With pleasant irony similar to Cooper's own, she tells him that she has lost the tape; no irrefutable record of the cowardice exists. She threatens Cooper with a class action suit on behalf of all survivors if he presses the story and also with a restraining order which he does not realize would be illegal. She tells him that she won the case for him with the return of his records but Cooper wanted publicity and believes, as she really does, that he lost more than he gained. By resolving *Denial* with a revelation that keeps Cooper active if weakened, Sagal distributes some blame to Gomrowitz; the victim is guilty.

THE TITLE CHARACTERS of Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women*, the 1994 Pulitzer Prize winner, never address each other by name and are identified in the program only by letters of the alphabet. A is ninety-two; B, fifty-two and C, twenty-six. In the first of the play's two acts, the middle-aged woman is aid and companion to the old one, and the young woman works in some vague capacity for the law firm that manages the old woman's estate. The first act belongs to A whose often funny and sometimes halting recollections touch on the timeless topics: youth, sex, love, marriage, death. With some regularity, she and B impatiently and sharply admonish C: "Grow up! . . . Do you

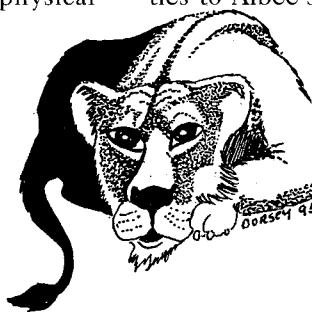
know you're dying?" and, more than once, "She'll learn." At the end of the act, A suffers an apparent stroke as she recalls the disintegration of her family; her aging mother and her sister "hated" her, and her son left home in his early twenties. At the opening of Act Two, A lies in the bed that holds center stage throughout the play. A breathing mask covers her face, and as Albee intends, the audience cannot realize that it sees a dummy. A, more vigorous than before and "*thoroughly rational*," enters soon after the act begins. After momentary puzzlement, we come to see that the three women are one: A speaks to C like "*a naughty child*" emphatically telling her to grow up, and B reacts with a smile, "She will; she does." C will not face the harsh physical realities of illness, disease and death, nor can she imagine years spent in a loveless marriage. Before two hardened if not wiser selves, she grits her teeth: "I'll never become you—either of you." This adult version of Peter Pan's "I won't grow up" rings hollow because we have dramatic proof before us in A and B of what she will become. Indeed, B tells us sarcastically how the act proceeds: "She wants to know how she *changed*. She wants to know how she turned into me. Next she'll want to know how I turned into her." Even when C grants her other selves their tough truths, she wants the prospect of some happiness before her. With greater understanding than before, B tells her that "now," middle-age, is the "happiest time" when one is "old enough to be a *little* wise, past being *really* dumb." C takes no offense at this judgment; she delivers the play's last long address to the audience: her time is the happiest when there is

None of that "further shore" nonsense . . . coming to the end of it; yes. So. There it is. You asked, after all. That's the happiest moment.

At this, the women come together,

hold hands and face front for A's last words and the play's: "When it's all done. When we stop. When we can stop."

It's like an expanded version of Beckett's *Rockaby*; we've heard the existentialist message before without the pointed dialogue and the dramatic elaboration. Beckett is in the air, too, when A asks in the first act, "Will he come today? Is today the day he comes?" We find out later that "he" is her son, and he arrives mid-way through Act Two to sit at her bedside for the rest of the play. He has no lines and keeps his back to the audience. This character, The Boy, has been expelled from a few schools and has an ambiguous relationship at best with his three-part mother. The similarities to Albee's own life are striking



enough to encourage reading *Three Tall Women* on a personal level. The Boy, a young Albee, is speechless in the women's world and is liberated only at the curtain call.

With only fleeting references to racism, *Three Tall Women* is basically a-social; the character relationships are not human ones. It's metaphysics are a-moral, self-centered existentialism. In marked contrast to the Pulitzer winner that followed him, Albee disguises where Foote explains; he floats where the other plods. At StageWest in Springfield, Munson Hicks directed the play as Albee himself might have hoped. He more than met the challenge of moving the cast naturally within the space of the single set and they came together at the end in an image of dramatic achievement. □

Note: A recent article in *Modern Drama* draws on the experience of the leading dramatic publisher and the leading agent to show that Albee and Fugard are the two most produced dramatists in the country. Costs of production must account for some of this popularity with regional theaters, but it is heartening to learn that work of genuine merit is being performed nationally.

From the author
of the prize-winning
national bestseller
MONTANA 1948

Justice

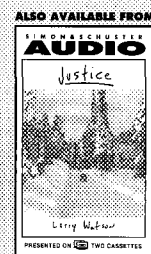
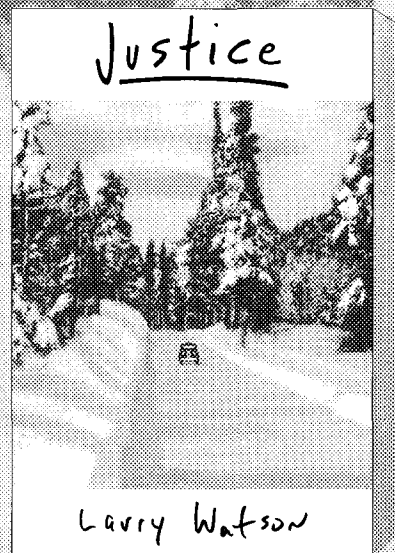
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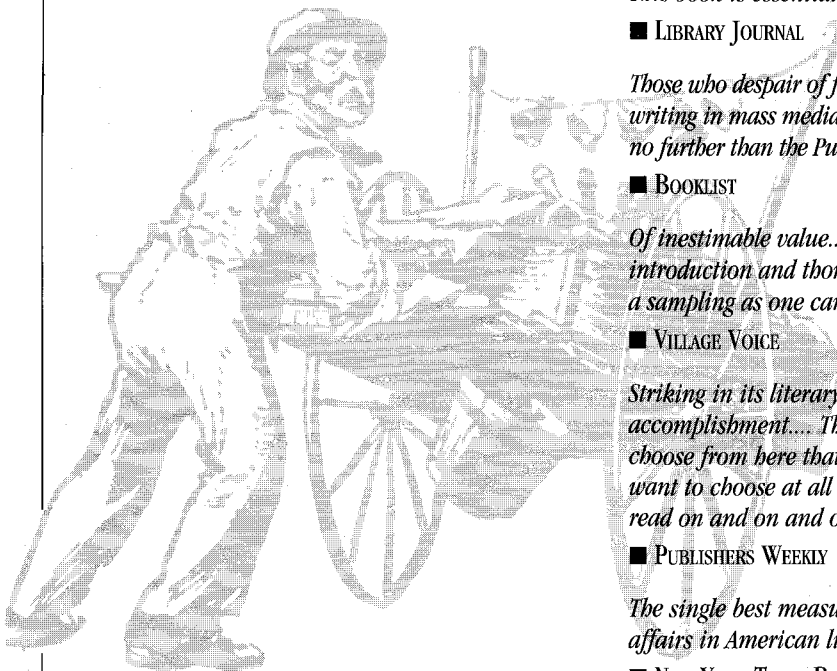
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